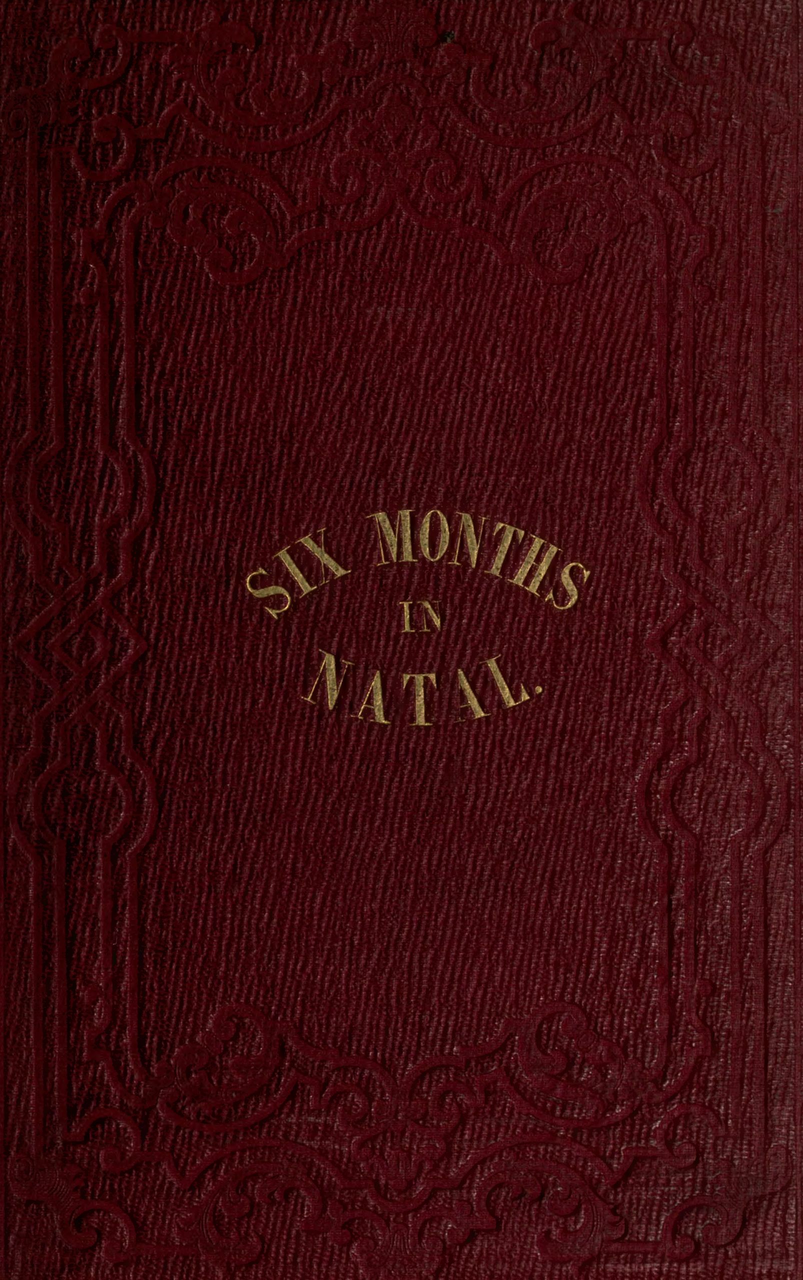

SIX MONTHS
IN
NATAL.

1868

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THE

DORP AND THE VELD;

OR

SIX MONTHS IN NATAL.

BY CHARLES BARTER, ESQ., B.C.L.,
FELLOW OF NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD.

* * *

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PREFACE.

It will matter very little to the reader of these pages what were the motives which induced the writer to undertake a voyage to Natal. Perhaps he was agent for some embryo land company; perhaps he nourished hopes of some colonial appointment; he may have been the bearer of a private despatch from Lord Grey to the King of the Zulus, or of a commercial missive from Messrs. Silver & Co. to their correspondents in D'Urban; he may have sought to recruit his health or relax his mind; pleasure or profit may have been the object of his voyage; to make money, to save it, or to spend it; or his character may have resembled that which I once heard a lady, learned in the science of grapho-phrenology, ascribe to a certain style of handwriting—that of one who would like to breakfast in England, lunch at the Cape, and dine at New Zealand. Whatever mystery there be the reader will doubtless solve after his own fashion, as we jog on together; perhaps there is no great secret in it after all. Thus much I may as well confess, since it forms one of my claims on his attention, and may add some weight to my opinions on debated subjects; that I have been long a traveller and a colonist; that I have farmed and lumbered in New Brunswick, and traversed Canada from east to west; that I have been in nearly all the United States, and am as

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familiar with the Ohio and Mississippi as with the Thames and Seine, and that the promotion of emigration having always been with me a favourite pursuit, I have made it my business to embrace every opportunity of collecting authentic information about those colonies which I had not visited in person.

I will add, that beyond the possession of some forty acres of waste land, which are probably of little or no value, I have not the slightest interest in the country about which I am going to write, and I am equally ignorant of any cause which should prejudice me against it. My only wish is to convey a correct impression of a land to which so many of our poor countrymen are looking with anxious and too often delusive hopes; and to prevent, as far as I can, the bitter disappointment, not to say despair, consequent on the failure of so important a step as that of emigration. If at the same time I can while away an otherwise listless hour for those to whom the subject is not of the same interest, and thus attract the attention of a single person whose power and influence might aid his will in promoting the welfare of his fellow-creatures, I shall not have written in vain.

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ERRATA.

PAGE	LINE
17,	11,—*not* to be omitted.
23,	11,—for *quina* read *quince.*
43,	9,—for *Ouer* read *Ober.*
53,	4,—for *outport* read *outpost.*
61,	33,—for *Human* read *Plaatberg.*
61,	33,—for *Rhinveld* read *Engeland.*
62,	3,—for *linquists* read *linguists.*
76,	15,—for *their* read *those.*
132,	10,—for *Dingle* read *Dargle.*

THE DORP AND THE VELD.

CHAPTER I.

WEIGHING ANCHOR—SPORTING EMIGRANTS—THE VOYAGE—WHICH COURSE TO STEER—A CLOSE SHAVE—LAND SHARKS—A NIGHT IN HARBOUR—A REVERIE.

It was about midnight, on the 22nd of June, 1850, that, after a parting dinner with some friends at the Pier Hotel, and a sentimental stroll in the Rosherville Gardens, I found myself on board the barque "Globe," A1, 310 tons or thereabout (I like to be particular), Captain Liddell, Commander, bound for Port Natal. She was weighing anchor, and there was the usual amount of shouting and swearing, of late arrivals and tender farewells, of broken hearts and missing luggage, while high above the din rose the cheering chorus of the sailors, as they heaved at the capstan:—

"'Tis time for me, 'tis time for you,
'Tis time for us to go:
Hurrah! hurrah! my hearty honnies,
'Tis time for us to go."

By the second morning the pilot had left us, we had rounded Beachey Head, and were running down Channel with a fresh north-easterly breeze.

Ours was not an emigrant ship, properly so called, and we were therefore free from the discomfort of crowded decks, as well as from the evils that attend the division of authority between the captain and surgeon in these vessels; indeed, there was no regular surgeon on board; no steerage passengers, and the "intermediates" had the run of the poop, and mixed with the occupiers of the higher-priced cabins without restraint. They were not above twenty in number, consisting chiefly of small tradesmen, taking out a little money, and, with few exceptions, a stock of very useless goods. There was a church-warden who delighted in abusing parsons, and a very small insignificant-looking chartist, who, on the strength of a pair of bushy whiskers, tried to look stern, and talked about "physical force" and the convincing power of cold steel. But, whatever their age, or calling, or previous habits, or to whatever employment they might look forward on their arrival in the land of promise, not one of them was without a gun. Such a collection of fire-arms I had never seen before,—singles and doubles, smooth bores, two-grooved, and poly-grooved, of all sizes and qualities, from the pea-rifle to the monster elephant-gun carrying four to the pound—from the costly and highly-finished Lancaster to the cheap Birmingham; pistols, revolving and not revolving; all these, and many more, were there to be found. The very ladies carried light fowling-pieces, and the caboose was continually beset by bullet-casters, to the great discomfiture of the good-natured black who presided there. As many of them had never handled a piece before, some of their manipulations were amusingly eccentric; but when they began actually to load and fire "for practice," as they said, I trembled with apprehension, and the captain, sympathising with me on account of his spars and rigging, put a hasty stop to the exhibition. I need scarcely say that not more than two or three of these men, since they landed in the colony, have ever had occasion to take gun or pistol in hand, unless to offer them for sale. Spite of these, however, and some other instances of partial insanity, they were, altogether, a pleasant hearty lot of fellows, and I have seldom seen so few of these petty jealousies and quarrels, that convert a ship into a Pandemonium, as among the passengers of the good barque Globe.

A voyage, unless it be varied by mutiny or shipwreck, is always a monotonous affair, and as ours was happily not relieved by any such exciting incident, I will spare the reader the infliction of a sea-log. We were nearly forty days reaching the Line, being harassed, after losing the N.E. trades, by an obstinate wind from S.S.W., which lasted a full fortnight—not an uncommon occurrence. The S.E. trades were more favourable, carrying us down to latitude 20° south, and bringing us close alongside of the Island of Trinidad, a solitary rock in the South Atlantic Ocean, partly covered with wood, and said to be inhabited by pigs.

We were off the Cape of Good Hope on the 1st of September, and the same evening we saw the light on Cape Agulhas, the southernmost point of Africa, distant about eighteen miles. The strong south-west current, which always sets down the Mozambique Channel and round the southern coast, renders the navigation between the Cape and Natal very tedious and uncertain, and there is great difference of opinion as to the best course to be steered. Some keep far away to southward and eastward, on the outer edge of the current, while others prefer the inner course, between it and the shore. We chose the latter, passing in sight of Algoa Bay, the mouths of the Keiskamma, Great Fish, and Buffalo Rivers, and of the fires which were burning along the whole length of coast. Nor was our captain far out in his calculations, for on the 7th of September we were abreast of our port, which we had passed in a gale of wind the day before, after a voyage of 76 days; thus accomplishing the distance from the Cape in six,—a far shorter time than is usually required by the regular coasters. I afterwards ascertained that all the shortest passages between the Cape and Natal had been made by ships pursuing this course, and am inclined to think it generally the best, though in the summer, when the south-east winds prevail, it may be sometimes advisable to give the land a wider berth.

The outside and inside of a harbour are not quite the same thing, as many have found to their cost, since the Grecian fleet was windbound off Aulis, and the blasts that came down from the Strymon

Κακόσχολοι, νήστιδες, δύσορμοι
Βροτῶνἄλαι, νεῶντε καὶ πεισμάτων ἀρειδεις

made their anchorage anything but secure. Off Natal it is not an uncommon event for a vessel to be detained a fortnight, waiting for spring tides and a fair wind to enable her to cross the bar; and the roadstead outside, though tolerably safe, is by no means a comfortable place in a severe gale. The fate of the Minerva, a fine 1400 ton ship, which dragged her anchors and was driven ashore on the bluff, about two months before our arrival, is a sad proof of this. She went to pieces in a few hours with all her cargo on board; and, though no lives were lost, yet more than a hundred emigrants were landed in a state of utter destitution.

As we drew near the shore, sail after sail appeared in view, till we counted six or seven vessels; some were on the point of departure, but the greater number anxiously waiting for the pilot, as the spring-tides were now at their height, and to-morrow entrance might be impracticable. The pilot himself, however, seemed to care very little about it, or perhaps he did not like the idea of one escaping the usual ordeal, for as he approached our ship he sung out to let go the anchors, and appeared quite taken aback when we refused to comply with his request. We had made up our minds to be inside the harbour that evening; accordingly we tacked up and down till the tide served, and then, coming gracefully round, took the lead, and stood in for the shore. As we approach the streak of foam which marks the line of the bar there are not many words spoken, and a shade of anxiety may be detected on several countenances; not that there is any ground for fear, but we draw eleven feet and a half of water, and we wish to do the thing well. Another moment, and we are upon it. One slight shock, which is nevertheless felt throughout the ship, and we are in still water;—the first English ship that has entered the harbour without dropping anchor! Three cheers for the Globe!

If we had been disappointed by the rugged aspect of the coast in the various glimpses we had obtained of it during the course of the last few days—and they certainly had not been encouraging, we were amply recompensed by the glorious view which burst upon us as we emerged from the narrow channel into the open bay. Surrounded by wooded heights, forming a mass of luxuriant foliage, broken by patches of the low white buildings which form the village of D'Urban, with a background of bare mountain in the distance, and the deep blue cloudless sky over all, the bay of Natal is indeed a lovely spot, hardly needing the immediate contrast which it presents to the wide expanse of ocean, to enhance its beauties in the eyes of the newly-arrived visitor. The custom-house, a substantial stone edifice, with a slate roof, is the most prominent object in the scene; it stands on the beach, just at the termination of the bush and the commencement of the spit of sand which runs out to the bar, and of which the bar is, in fact, a part. Here all seemed life and animation; gay parties on horseback, among whom we could detect more than one riding-habit, crowded to the edge of the water, while every boat in the place appeared to be afloat, and filled with eager faces. We had scarcely taken up our position, and laid hold of African soil, ere we were boarded by a motley crew of agents, store-keepers, custom-house officers, and a fair proportion of a class known in America as "loafers," and by sailors universally as land-sharks. There are plenty of such cattle in all colonies, and I mean no offence to the good folk of D'Urban in saying that they are not exempt from the pest. All were of course eager for news, and for some time there was a perfect torrent of question and answer, interrupted only by exclamations of surprise, or satisfaction or displeasure, as the contents of our budget chanced to affect the listeners. Newspapers were at a premium, and the bearers of private letters were important personages. The approach of night at length put an end to the tumult, and we were again left to ourselves, one only of our passengers having gone ashore; he had been a commercial traveller, and was bent on a spree.

There is something in the reaction which follows moments of more than ordinary excitement, ever impressive, if not actually solemn; and as I leant over the taffrail, watching the countless shoals of fish that broke the smooth surface of the water, this feeling came upon me with peculiar force. The stillness of the sea, the silence, broken only by the distant cry of jackal or wild cat, the absence of the usual watch on board, the ship herself motionless and lifeless, with naked spars, reposing on her watery couch as if she too knew that her labours were at an end; the perfect security which this repose indicated, the loom of the dark forest on either side, the mingled sensations of which even the veteran traveller must be conscious, to some extent, on his arrival in a new and unknown land, the uncertainty which begets wild fancies and speculations, and dreamy visions, soon to be dispelled, the brief but death-like pause before entering on an untried sphere of action;—all these thoughts and objects, within and around, combined to make that night more memorable to me than days of "moving accident by flood or field." But I can scarcely hope that my musings will be deemed equally interesting, even by the most friendly reader.

* * *

CHAPTER II.

D'URBAN—A GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE—INNS—WAGON-HUNTING—THE COACH-OFFICE—A COOL RECEPTION—CIVILITY OF CUSTOM-HOUSE OFFICERS—CONTRADICTORY REPORTS—NATAL PLAGUES—"MORE TICKS THAN GRASS"—COMMERCE—CAPE TRADE.

THE next morning we landed, and, taking off shoes and stockings, walked across the wet sands, which at low water are laid bare over nearly a third of the harbour, to the village of D'Urban, distant about a mile and a-half. When the tide is in, the road lies through the bush, making a *détour* of a mile round a mangrove swamp, and passing the head of Cato's Creek, so called after one of the most enterprising merchants in the colony.

D'Urban is supposed to be laid out in streets at right angles, but the various forms of the buildings, the clumps of bush which continually intervene, and the sandy plain on which the whole place stands, give it a very irregular but at the same time a picturesque appearance. Now a neat little brick cottage presents itself, with green verandah and low thatched roof. Now an edifice of wattle and dab, which, though it is nothing more than a series of large sheep hurdles plastered with mud, makes a very comfortable habitation; reed and dab is preferred by some, as offering more effectual resistance to the attacks of the white ant. Here stands an uncouth building of corrugated iron, there a Kaffir hut of sticks and grass, looking like a large and very rough bee-hive; by its side a house of boards, and in one or two instances a stone or brick building of two stories. Houses of every kind were in process of erection, while clusters of tents here and there shewed where the newly arrived emigrants were making their first essay of colonial hardships, and completed the foreground of the picture. It was backed by the fine sweep of the Berea, a densely-wooded hill, which almost encircles the plain, and shuts out the view of the interior,—destined, perhaps, hereafter to be the site of many a beautiful villa, but at present almost impervious to the white man, the favourite abode of snakes and leopards, and not unfrequently visited by herds of wandering elephants. It was Sunday, and the gay plumage of the fair part of the population, while it showed that even here fashion had her votaries, formed an odd contrast with the dusky, though not ungraceful limbs of the naked Kaffirs, whom we met at every turn, and whose appearance, after all, was most in keeping with the *tout ensemble* of the scene. The dress of the men generally was not out of character, though every now and then the absurd custom of black coat and cylinder hat, under a burning sun, reminded one strongly of the self-imposed tortures of the Hindoos, and argued little for the common sense of the wearers.

As I was walking up the sandy street in company with two or three fellow-passengers, all of us, I have no doubt, looking the "freshman" to perfection, a little incident occurred which, if only for its rarity, is worth recording. Passing one of the eccentric iron buildings which I have noticed, and which must be familiar to the London reader, we were politely accosted by the proprietor, and after a short conversation, invited to enter his store. It was roomy, well ventilated, and much cooler than I could have supposed, and filled with a large assortment of ironmongery. He told us that he had erected it himself, and that though prices were continually fluctuating, owing to the large stocks brought out by successive emigrants, which are often sold at great loss for ready cash, he was still doing a very fair business. While we were talking, a bottle of champagne was quietly uncorked, and, as if it had been a matter of course, glasses were handed round, and we were heartily welcomed to Natal. A kind offer of assistance or advice in case of need was not wanting, and we continued our walk, considerably pleased with our first reception.

There are two inns in D'Urban, where the fare and accommodation are very passable, and where the traveller might be sufficiently comfortable (colonially speaking) but for the constant and excessive consumption of strong liquors prevailing there. Sitting in the public room, it is often difficult to avoid a row; a stand-up fight is an every day occurrence, and the horrors of *delirium tremens* a frequent exhibition at these places. Woe to the unlucky emigrant who, on his first arrival, with money in his pocket and little power of self-control, falls among the set that congregate there! His career will be short, and its end may be easily foretold. The charge at these inns is five shillings per day, the principal profits arising from the sale of beer, wine, and spirits. An excellent boarding-house has since been established by Mrs. Russell, one of the sufferers in the wreck of the Minerva, which is frequented by the principal merchants, and is entirely free from the evil alluded to; and others, I believe, of an humbler class, are now to be found; but the inns sadly need reformation—they are, in fact, little better than canteens. We took luncheon, however, or tiffin, as it is called in Africa, at one of them; and as it was our first meal ashore, were little disposed to find fault, though the absence of anything like fruit was a sore disappointment. After all we had heard and read (how it had made our mouths water in the tropics!) about the rapid growth and easy cultivation of pine apples, oranges, and all kinds of thirst-quelling productions, to find that except in the gardens of one or two of the principal people, fruit was an entire myth, just as much as the golden apples of the Hesperides, or those which gemmed the trees in Alladin's cave! What a falling off was here! We consoled ourselves as well as we might, with a glass of very tolerable poulac, and after perambulating the town till its novelty had well nigh worn off, returned by the bush road to the ship—where, through the captain's kindness, two or three of us still retained our cabins—very little enlightened by our day's quest.

I had seen quite enough, however, to determine me on proceeding at once to Maritzburg; and, one of the most agreeable of my fellow-passengers being of the same mind, we resolved, without loss of time, to hire a wagon in which we might transport thither ourselves and our effects. This proved a more difficult task than we had imagined, and in the prosecution of it we were passed on from house to house, after a kind of "send the fool forward" fashion, which was anything but satisfactory. One wagon was just let, another was at the farm, the oxen were astray, or ill, or otherwise employed. For further information we were always referred to the market-place, which, after having innocently traversed, at least a dozen times, we discovered at length to be a sea of sand, studded here and there with islands, thrown up by the white ant, and covered with bush. The sand to which I have previously alluded has accumulated considerably since the removal of the line of bush that grew along the shore, and served as a protection against the easterly winds. By the side of these enormous ant-heaps is the rendezvous for the wagons to and from Maritzburg and all parts of the country; in short, it is the general coach-office of D'Urban. Even here our search was unsuccessful, and we were about to abandon it in despair, when my friend bethought him of a letter of introduction, of which he was the bearer, and felt sure that he need only present it in order to put an end to all our difficulties. Though not equally sanguine as to the result, I was yet anxious to leave no means untried, and therefore said nothing to damp his ardour. He accordingly departed, having fixed our place of meeting at the inn. At the time appointed I found him sitting in the corner of the room, looking very disconsolate, and smoking as a man only can smoke when thoroughly out of temper with himself and mankind. A cool reception—to be kept standing at the door, not even asked to sit down: these things are trying to an Englishman's temper, but should cause little surprise or indignation in a colony where self-dependence is the chief virtue, and the motto too often—"Every man for himself," &c. "But he might have expressed an indefinite hope of seeing me again, if only for the sake of common civility," argued he.

"So he might; but, perhaps, he was too honest, or too independent to say what he did not mean. At all events, he has taught us a good lesson, for which you will thank him one of these days."

I do not think my homily had any great effect, but we had no time to waste in words, as our luggage was yet on board, and there was the much dreaded process of examination to go through. And here an agreeable disappointment awaited us, our boxes being allowed to pass, as in common sense they should, without even the ceremony of opening, and every vexatious delay or impediment being removed. Indeed, I cannot speak too highly of the way in which business is carried on in every department of the custom-house at Natal, nor of the readiness shown by its officers, the two Messrs. Newton especially, to facilitate the disembarkation of the emigrants.

The carriage of luggage from the Point to the town is five shillings the cart-load—generally drawn by six or eight oxen—and it affords a profitable occupation to a considerable number of people. On my return with the last load, I was delighted to find that L.'s visit to the coach-office had been at length successful, that he had hired a wagon and pair of oxen for £3, the regular charge, and that we were to start (D.V.) the next morning.

That evening at the inn we met several farmers, and it was quite perplexing to hear the different accounts which each gave of the capabilities of the soil in the neighbourhood. One of them, an enterprising young emigrant from the pastures of Essex, spoke in the highest terms of the country. He was renting land under Mr. Willy, a large proprietor there, and, according to his own account, had come out, but a few months before, with twenty-eight shillings in his pocket! His opinion was, that barley, oats, rye, and all kinds of vegetables, would grow well, and he had little doubt about wheat, of which he had a crop that promised to be very fine, but was not yet arrived at maturity. He evidently spoke from an overflow of high spirits, and his experience was of short date; he confessed, too, that he had undergone great hardships, and he was, besides, a man of that elastic character which must, if joined with steady perseverance, command success anywhere. Generally the tone was desponding; the outcry against Mr. Byrne's scheme was then at its height, and the complaints were bitter and clamorous. The town was crowded with emigrants, who had either, from gross mismanagement, been unable to obtain their miserable allotments of twenty acres, or who had been deterred from taking them up by the discouraging reports of those who had returned in despair, quelled by the obstacles that presented themselves, and the apparent hopelessness of overcoming them. I must say that there appeared very little of that stubborn energy which characterizes the Canadian backwoodsman among the emigrants at D'Urban, and that there was a listlessness about most of them which may probably be attributable in great measure to the climate, but which, from whatever cause it may arise, is certainly not favourable to the development of the resources of a new country, or the rapid progress of a young settlement. My own opinion of the agricultural qualities of the coast land I shall reserve for a future chapter, but, before leaving D'Urban, I must pass sentence upon it as one of the last places I should ever choose or recommend for a residence. Its climate is excessively hot and enervating, and must be very trying to most constitutions, its sandy streets form anything but an agreeable promenade, and it is, moreover, infested with two or three plagues peculiarly its own. Chief among them we have the ticks, which though more or less common throughout the sea-land, abound here to a fearful extent, and are determined enemies to the comforts of every other living creature. In removing them from the person great care is required, lest the head should remain behind, as when once the skin has closed upon it it is not easily dislodged. But the poor animals suffer most. I have frequently taken them from the bodies of horses, swollen to the size of a large acorn, and I have seen cattle actually devoured by them. From this circumstance, as well as from the deficiency of good pasture and fresh water, it is next to impossible to keep oxen, horses, or even dogs, in decent condition. Those who value their horses keep them constantly stabled, which, owing to the high price of forage, is an expensive plan, and not nearly so healthy for the animal as being turned out to grass where it is practicable. The disease, too, so fatal to horses in many parts of South Africa, is very prevalent here; its symptoms somewhat resemble those of pleurisy, but its real nature is very little understood, and no remedy has yet been discovered for it.

I have hinted at the absence of fresh water: this is indeed a great evil, and prabably the cause of many others. The water used in the town is chiefly drawn from a spring in the neighbourhood of the camp, and is decidedly brackish and unwholesome, and the same may be said of the two rivers which flow in at the head of the bay. Pure water for the supply of ships and individuals who require it must be brought across the Berea from the Umgeni, and few think it worth the trouble of fetching. To lead a channel from the river into the bay so as to ensure a constant supply of its clear stream to the inhabitants of D'Urban, has always been a favourite project with those who have the interest of the place at heart. I believe that an engineer was employed to survey the ground, and that he reported favourably; indeed, I rather think the work was actually commenced, but from want of funds was abandoned before much progress had been made. This is a matter so intimately connected with the health of the town, that nothing short of the absolute impracticability of the scheme should interfere with its immediate completion, and I have little doubt that the necessity will soon become so urgent as to ensure this result.

Another plague peculiar to the environs of the bay, the cause of which is unknown but may probably be referred to the last mentioned deficiency, is the Natal sore, a very painful boil which makes its appearance on the arms and legs of new-comers, often defying all attempts to cure or to reduce it. Few on their first arrival escape this disorder, and even old colonists are not exempt from its attacks. They are generally successive, one sore appearing as the other dies away; and this sometimes continues for many months. All kinds of infallible nostrums are in request both among the Dutch and English, and all are equally useless; the best being a moderate but not too low diet, adhesive plaster, frequent bathing, and patience. The vulgar error, of course, prevails, that they are "a healthy sign." They are unknown at Maritzburg; nor have I ever seen or heard of them in any other part of the country; but I have frequently known a single day's sojourn at the Bay produce them in numbers.

The Dutchmen, whose habits are chiefly pastoral, hold the place in utter aversion, and send their oxen thither, even for a few hours, with great reluctance. One of them, in conversing with me on the subject, summed up its merits in a few words:—"I don't like the place," said he, "more ticks than grass."

In spite of all these drawbacks the town increases, and shows many signs of prosperity. Large stores are erected, a public library has been established, a municipality talked about, and the good people hint at the removal of the seat of government to their town from Pieter Maritzburg. But there is little chance of such an event being even contemplated by the authorities, and it were a thousand pities that it ever should. As long as emigration continues, the port derives the most immediate benefit from the inflow of capital and enterprize, a large proportion of which is necessarily arrested in its further progress, and diverted into channels which all circulate within its limits; while the inland town requires the support of a government to attract and encourage an agricultural population, on whom its welfare, and, indeed, that of the whole colony, must ultimately depend, to say nothing of the necessity of a central position from which all parts of the country may be commanded, in case of internal disturbance or foreign invasion.

The commerce of D'Urban is not yet in a sufficiently settled state to deserve more than a passing notice; indeed, without exports, it can hardly be said to exist. The rapid succession of immigrants, and the consequent abundance of ready money, have given an extra stimulus to trade, which, for some time, assumed the appearance of full-blown prosperity. Persons of sanguine temperament saw in this precocious development the immediate promise of a golden harvest, and speculation ran riot, though not to the alarming extent that has always preceded a commercial crisis elsewhere. As, however, none of the money remains in the colony, but, after a brief circulation, returns, through the hands of the merchants, either to the Cape or to the mother country, it is evident that this prosperity must be not only transient and fallacious, but injurious to the best interests of the settlers, and that whenever the tide of emigration shall cease to flow a great amount of ruin and bankruptcy must be the result. Already signs of instability have appeared; one or two houses have failed, and a large body of the merchants of D'Urban have adopted the ominous restriction of allowing only two months' credit to their customers, which, besides the inconvenience it occasions to the farmer in the interior, where cash is raised with difficulty, is in itself an admission of the insecure grounds on which their business has been heretofore conducted.

The fact is, that trade occupies a very undue proportion of the population, when compared with safer and more useful pursuits; whether this is owing to a disinclination to hard manual labour—natural in a warm climate, or to the previous habits of the class from which the emigrants have chiefly been selected, is not easy to define; but one great reason is the absurd practice which prevails, and which, from interested motives, is too often recommended to intending emigrants,—I mean that of taking out cargoes of goods far beyond those needed for their own use, with the idea of increasing their little capital by their immediate sale at a considerable profit. I need scarcely say that their expectations are seldom, if ever, realized. There is a glut of such imports in the market; and the emigrant, finding his supposed treasure little more than an incumbrance, is driven to the alternative of either selling off at once, at a very great sacrifice, or of setting up a store, and entering into a ruinous competition with the already established tradesman, without even the prospect of success to justify the undertaking.

The reader will conceive the folly of this practice when I mention that I have seen drills, scarifiers, and other costly implements totally unsuited to a new soil, lying on the beach where they have been landed, the owners being unwilling to incur the expense or trouble of removing them, and that I have known some of Ransome's best ploughs sold for £2. Guns and rifles may generally be bought far cheaper than in England. One of our passengers had brought out a Scotch cart, which he told me had cost him £35, before it arrived in Natal, and he was glad to part with it at a much less price, for though handy things on a farm, they are not suitable for long journeys, and do not supersede the necessity of buying a wagon.

But next to the absence of exports, the greatest drag to the commerce of Natal is its intimate connection with, and almost entire dependence on the old colony, resulting partly from its geographical position and the want of means to establish other relations; but more especially from the fact of the original settlement of the country having proceeded thence.

To the simple Dutch farmers, Cape Town was the *ne plus ultra* of civilization and refinement, the fountain of wealth and commercial enterprise. To them it was in the fullest sense the Metropolis, for, of their own mother country they knew little and cared less; and it was bound to them by still closer ties. Many of them could number among their relations one, at least, of the Cape merchants; and, with a people so clannish in their habits, it was a matter of course that the very few wants, incidental to their primitive style of living, should be supplied from that quarter. As the settlement increased, some of the Cape houses found it worth while to form branch establishments in the new colony, which, uniting a large trade in ivory and other native produce to their own ostensible business, became flourishing concerns.

On the abandonment of the country by the Boers many of these merchants still remained, and on the arrival of the English colonists held the trade in their own hands, while the advantages of an organized system, and of long experience, enabled them for some time to defy competition. But the English colonist, however humble, was far too knowing to give his ready money for the slop goods which had satisfied his Dutch predecessors, and for which they had willingly exchanged the produce of their farms, or the spoils of their skill and daring in the chase; nor did it need any great sagacity to discover that the unloading and unshipping of English goods at the Cape, the double payment of port dues and customs, and the additional delay in the transit of perishable materials from the place of their manufacture to that of their sale, could have but one result: the Natal purchaser was supplied with an inferior article, the refuse, perhaps, of the Cape market, at a higher price than it would have cost him to obtain goods of first-rate quality from England, were a direct communication established. To the attainment of this very desirable end the inability to provide a return cargo for ships unloading at the port of Natal has hitherto proved an unsurmountable obstacle; and English merchants are thus driven into the Cape trade, which, with its manifest disadvantages, flourishes greatly, and employs a considerable number of coasters—not the least prosperous adventurers in that part of the world. A regular steamer, running between Natal and the Cape, in immediate connection with the Screw Steam Ship Company's line, would remove this drawback, and effect a rapid and complete revolution in the commerce of D'Urban.

CHAPTER III.

ONE TOO MANY—EN ROUTE—THE BEREA—COTTON FARM—PINE TOWN—BOTHA'S—PLUCK HAS IT—WILD TURKEYS—UYS' DOORNS—RAPID RISE OF STREAMS—FALLACIES OF GUIDE-BOOKS—ARRIVAL AT MARITZBURG—OUR DRIVER—AGREEABLY DISAPPOINTED—DESCRIPTION OF MARITZBURG.

A WET day, not a Scotch mist, but a steady hard drenching rain, put travelling out of the question, and kept us close prisoners in the hotel. As the roads are generally nothing but wagon-tracks, more or less worn according to the traffic upon them, a few hours' rain makes them so slippery that the oxen can with difficulty keep their footing even on plain ground, while the hill sides are perfectly impassable. The returning sunshine, however, quickly dries them again, and as they are never traversed when in a soft state they are little cut up by wheels, and a muddy road with deep ruts, such as one meets with in dear damp England, is unknown in Natal.

The following morning was bright, cloudless, and not without a trace of yesterday's storm. Soon after breakfast the loud smack of the whip announced a wagon, and presently the long line of oxen passed slowly by, and the huge tent-covered vehicle stood before the door. I looked in vain for the Dutch driver whom I had seen on the previous day, but, being told that it was "all right," was preparing to load, when a second wagon rolled up, on the *voor kist* of which I at once recognized our man. It appeared that L——, to make assurance doubly sure, had hired two wagons instead of one, and the *embarras de richesses* was like to prove as great an annoyance as the dearth we had experienced before, when he luckily stumbled on the fact that one of the wagoners had only been engaged conditionally, and that as the contract had not been ratified in a second interview it was null and void. The rejected, who was an Englishman of very unprepossessing countenance, was by no means satisfied with our decision, and talked blusteringly about the terrors of the law; but, finding all his threats ineffectual, he departed with the vague warning that we had not seen the end of it. Meanwhile we were busily employed in stowing away our luggage, a process which requires some skill, and which three or four Kafirs rather interrupted than forwarded, though they did their best, and worked willingly enough.

At length all was ready, and at the word "*trek*" the oxen moved slowly off over the sandy plain. L—— and I walked on a-head, and were soon ascending the steep side of the Berea, our road bordered on either hand by the castor-oil plant, which grows here in profusion. There was not much appearance of fine timber, but the underwood was matted together into a kind of net-work, and seemed quite impenetrable, save where some shrubs, or broken branches marked the path which the elephant had forced through the tangled thicket. From the summit the view was exquisite: the quaint irregular town; the smooth bay, with its miniature islands; the various vessels riding at anchor, amongst which our graceful barque, with her lofty white tapering spars, was easily recognized; the bold outline of the bluff, with the signal-post on its crest, and the breakers dashing at its feet; and the calm though treacherous ocean, glowing like liquid fire in the noonday sun; so beautiful did the whole appear that all the defects we had discovered in the plain vanished for the moment from our recollection, and it was with lively admiration, not unmixed with regret, that we turned our backs upon the scene and continued our journey.

Beyond the Berea the country was rather more free, though still bushy and broken into a succession of hill and dale. About five miles out of D'Urban, our driver called a halt, and having "outspanned," or freed the oxen from the yoke, suffering them to graze at liberty, proceeded to kindle a fire, and prepare the noonday meal. Slices of beef were spitted on a long stick, which was then stuck into the ground so as to hang over the fire. The meat thus broiled, with a loaf of bread and a cup of excellent coffee, formed a sumptuous repast, to which a pipe supplied the never-failing dessert. After about an hour's rest we resumed our journey, the country becoming less and less bushy, till not a shrub was visible, and assuming a mountainous and rugged appearance.

At the fourteenth mile we passed German Town, the site of Mr. Bergtheil's German settlement for the cultivation of cotton. Some pods which we examined were pronounced by L——, who is a judge, to contain good samples, but the season of harvest was long past, and we were told that for want of labourers to pluck it a great quantity of the cotton had been suffered to decay upon the ground.

The next halt was at Murray's, the farm of an intelligent emigrant, with a good deal of the Yankee spirit of enterprize in his composition, who has perhaps accomplished more than any other settler in the colony. His solitary house has now become the nucleus of a thriving circle of farms, and a village has sprung into existence, called, after the Lieutenant-Governor, Pine Town, which promises to be one of the most important in the district. Here we took our evening meal, and, climbing the steep ascent of Cowie's Hill, from whose summit we caught the last glimpse of the sea, continued our *trek* beneath a clear soft moon, to Botha's, the halfway-house between D'Urban and Maritzburg, where we rested for the night. Finding the little inn, however, already occupied by a noisy party, we declined the offer of accommodation, and retiring to our wagon we nestled in among the luggage, and slept the wholesome sleep that exercise alone can produce.

There was little variety in our next day's route. The road was still hilly, the scenery still wild, and of that character which generally denotes the intersection of stratified formations by the primæval rock. Considerable improvements have been made at different parts of the road; some hills have been avoided by a *détour*, while in others cuttings have been made, and trenches dug to carry off the violence of the summer floods. Eight miles beyond Botha's is Sterk Spruit, a shallow brooklet, whose steep and broken banks showed plainly that at times it was transformed into a roaring torrent. Here is another way-side inn, which we passed unvisited, preferring our *al fresco* meal under the shadow of the wagon to its questionable advantages.

At our next outspann we overtook W——, a fellow-passenger, who had started from D'Urban two days before us with a wagon and the Scotch cart already mentioned, and had met with a complete chapter of accidents. His oxen, a pair which he had purchased at the Bay, had refused to draw, and the Kafirs whom he had hired either could not or would not drive. One whole span had strayed away the previous evening, and not being able to recover them he had been obliged to leave his cart on the road. He was accompanied by his wife, who was rather cast down at this unpromising commencement, though she could not fail to be cheered by the indomitable pluck with which her husband encountered all his difficulties, shewing that he at least was well fitted for the task he had undertaken. On this plain, which was greener than any we had yet seen, we observed several *paauws*, or wild turkeys, and endeavoured by stalking to get a shot, but, the grass being short, there was no cover, and the birds were wild, and would not suffer us to approach them.

Towards evening, our route became less hilly, and enlivened by clumps of the African thorn, or mimosa, which gradually spread over the whole plain.

This tract is called, after one of the original Dutch settlers, "Uys' doorns,"* and here is the last house on the road before arriving at Maritzburg, from which it is about eight miles distant. We outspanned for the night among the bushes, and, though sleeping on the ground, were tormented by none of the insects with which Africa is said to swarm.

In the cool of the morning, L—— and I had a refreshing bath in a brook hard by, which, like most of the streams at this season, was very low, though by no means dried up. The reader may form some idea of the rapidity with which these rivulets swell and subside, when I inform him that on one occasion a friend of mine, having crossed this very brook without difficulty, the water being scarcely up to his horse's knees, was surprised to find that only a few hours before a private of the Cape Mounted Rifles had been swept away with his horse by the violence of the flood.

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* Uys was one of the most intrepid leaders of the Dutch immigration, and was killed in an engagement with the Kafirs. His gallant defence and death are well described by Sir W. C. Harris, in his "Wild Sports in South Africa."

The remainder of our road was good, and comparatively level; but as our driver took advantage of this to urge forward the oxen at a brisk trot, the jolting, which at all times is sufficiently violent, was tremendous—even worse than on the rougher parts of the road. The heat, too, was intense, and the aspect of the soil around, from which the last year's grass had been lately burned, arid and desert-like.

I may here remark that the first impressions of the traveller in Natal depend entirely upon the season of his arrival, the face of the country changing, after the summer rains, from fresh green to withered brown or coal-black. Hence arise the contradictory accounts which have reached England, the authors representing either appearance as a permanent feature of the country in proportion as their own ideas have been coloured by the realization or disappointment of their hopes, too often, it is to be feared, with the interested view of producing a particular effect on the minds of intending emigrants.

Our first view of Maritzburg scarcely tended to raise our spirits, or appeared to justify the enthusiasm with which it was regarded by our driver, whose father, Maritz, had been one of its founders. It is situated on a *bult*, or hump of land, rising out of a natural basin, and surrounded by hills, which, to the west and north-west, stand in high ridges, and whose bare, black sides, unrelieved to our eyes by a single tree, formed a dreary boundary to the scene. The "Little Bushman's River," a third-rate stream, almost encircles the town, and is spanned at the entrance on the D'Urban road by a wooden bridge. Crossing this, and passing alongside of the turf wall that fences the thinly-tenanted cemetery, in which an obelisk now marks the grave of the Lieutenant-Governor, Martin West, we found ourselves at the outskirts of the town, where, as it was Sunday, and high noon, we made our final outspan, Maritz having kindly allowed us to leave our "notions" in the wagon, till we had decided on a place of residence.

Throughout the journey, we had received more than ordinary civility and attention from our Dutch driver, almost amounting to cordiality, though, like most of his countrymen, he was rather taciturn than communicative, and was not without his prejudices. His ruling passion seemed to be a hatred of the Kafirs, which was not to be wondered at, seeing that his father had been killed by them, and that there was scarcely one of his kindred who could not trace some irreparable injury or loss to their agency.

We found the inn crowded with loungers, and, though with rather more pretension, not less objectionable than those at D'Urban, and congratulated ourselves upon the foresight which had prevented us from unloading there, and saved us the trouble of a second removal. After dinner, we strolled about the town, which, on a closer inspection, revealed an interior far different from that which its distant view had led us to anticipate. Not that there was anything imposing, or grand, or even beautiful, in any of its features, nor that it contained any strange or foreign objects, which would strike the eye, or command attention. There were wanting even the irregularity of outline and variety of execution which formed one of the chief attractions of D'Urban. Its streets were really at right angles, its simple whitewashed houses exhibited few architectural vagaries, nor was there much taste or elegance displayed in their construction or adornment. The Colonial Offices, the Court-House, Gaol, and Dutch Church, were plain, unpretending edifices; and the two-storied house of Mr. Zietsman, with its corniced roof and balustrade, the most ostentatious building in the town, had quite a solitary and discontented look by the side of its humble neighbours. Neatness was perhaps the prevailing characteristic; and yet we could not fail at once to observe that the selection of the spot and the original design had been the work of no mean 'prentices of their craft, and that it was something more than a mere inland village which they contemplated.

The abundance of water, which, flowing on either side of the streets, not only supplies the ordinary wants of the inhabitants, but enables them to irrigate their gardens with the fertilizing stream,—the large market square which the hopeful eye might easily picture thronged with a busy and industrious population, and teeming with the produce of well-cultivated farms. The happy slope of the ground, by which drainage is facilitated and health secured—the commanding position of the camp which overlooks the whole extent of the plain, form a combination of advantages not always to be found in large and populous cities, and we could not but confess that should the colony increase in prosperity and importance even so as to equal the expectations of its most ardent admirers, Pieter Maritzburg was in no respect unworthy to be its capital.

Apart from these practical considerations there were not wanting efforts of taste and refinement just sufficient to show how great in this respect also were its capabilities for improvement. Here and there green hedges of quina or pomegranate inclosed the nicely-kept garden; verandahs, around whose posts were trained beautiful and luxuriant creepers, relieved the uniformity of white wall; roses abounded, and the weeping-willow had been planted by the side of the little *sloots*, or water-courses, and flourished amazingly, as did the *seringeboom* or lilac-tree. One or two specimens of the blue gum, planted four years before, had already attained a great height, and there appeared no reason why many foreign trees should not succeed equally as well. Were the experiment of planting tried on a large scale, and should it prove successful, I know of no greater boon that could be conferred on the town or its inhabitants. A want of shade is at present one of its chief natural deficiencies,—no slight one beneath the rage of an almost tropical sun. This want supplied, the now open and bare-looking market-place surrounded with a cool and shady promenade, the entrances to the town and some of the streets planted in avenues, and each *erf* contributing its quota of varied foliage, Maritzburg would be one of the prettiest and most delightful, as well as one of the best situated and planned of colonial cities.

There is about the whole place, too, an air of tranquil repose, well suited to the centre of an essentially pastoral district, and vividly recalling the primitive habits of its original families. The Dutch element has not yet, as in D'Urban, been quite extinguished by its more active and powerful rival, and I confess that greatly as I admire that restless energy which marks the progress of English trade and enterprize, I shall be almost sorry to see its final triumph here.

CHAPTER IV.

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION—COMFORTABLY SETTLED—LAID UP—SOCIETY IN MARITZBURG—COLONIAL ARISTOCRACY—DUTCH AND ENGLISH—EMIGRANTS INDEED!—THE CHURCH—LAWYERS AND THEIR BILLS—AN UNIVERSAL GENIUS—DOCTOR JACK—SURVEYORS—'BUS VERSUS WAGON—A MEETING IN THE DARK—THE NATAL HORSE.

THERE are times when a sense of loneliness, not easily accounted for or dispelled, will creep over the most seasoned minds. Such a feeling was upon me when, after parting with regret from my friendly and agreeable fellow-traveller, whose business led him in a different direction, I started to deliver a letter of introduction, of which I was the bearer, to Mr. Henderson, one of the chief merchants of the place. I need scarcely say how all my apprehensions gave way before a frank and hearty reception. Now all difficulties vanished, and everything assumed a cheery and hopeful aspect. Under Mr. Henderson's guidance I was soon comfortably settled in a newly established boarding-house with all my traps about me, and was deep in the mysteries of unpacking. I had taken the precaution of having all my boxes lined with tin and soldered, and had the satisfaction of finding bits, stirrups, and guns in untarnished brightness. Here I had ample time to consider my future movements, being laid up with one of the painful sores which I mentioned in a former chapter, and unable even to put my foot to the ground. In this interval I made one or two pleasant acquaintances, and was duly instructed in the gossip of the place till I became quite *au courant des affaires*, and as many of the discoveries I thus made were confirmed by after experience I may as well take this opportunity of imparting them to the reader.

I found society in Maritzburg partaking more than usually of that anomalous character which it so frequently assumes in colonial towns as well as in many remote places where the finer materials for its organization are deficient. In such confined circles those who, *faute de mieux*, hold the highest places are too apt to be over-jealous of their tenure not to be incessantly haunted by the fear of compromising their position in the smallest degree. They regard all new comers with an eye of suspicion, and are very strict in requiring vouchers for admittance into their coterie. To a certain extent these precautions are not only excusable, but really necessary. Among the higher classes emigration, with its novelty and its daring and adventurous character, has lost also its prestige. It has become popular and vulgar; it has dwindled from a national enterprize to a mercantile speculation. Instead of a noble profession, full of great aims and important duties, and offering perhaps the widest scope of any for the profitable exercise of youthful energy and talent, it has too often been regarded as the last resource for the bankrupt in fortune, character, and reputation, or as an escape-valve to those undisciplined spirits, which, boiling under the restraints of an artificial state of society, are in constant danger of breaking out into open mutiny. To such as those the colonies offer a ready asylum, while those who, with Pisistratus Caxton, make emigration the object of their early and deliberate choice, are comparatively so few that there is a positive prejudice, not altogether without reason, against gentlemen emigrants.

But if, on the score of moral propriety, a certain degree of exclusiveness is thus rendered indispensable, exclusiveness of caste is altogether without justification. The very essence of colonial prosperity is unity of purpose and of action, and this can never be obtained while social distinctions, with all their array of internal warfare, are allowed to prevail. The Phocæans left their native country "*omnis execrata civitas*," bound by one oath, stimulated by one common desire, or they would never have founded an important province in the heart of Gaul. It was a band of brothers who landed in New England and sowed the seeds of a mighty nation in the barren soil of Massachussets. "*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*," those terms so much misused at home, have, or ought to have, a real and useful meaning in a small community, which cannot afford to split into different classes, each set against the other, and where the arena is so confined that the contrast is not, as in the mother country, one of masses, but of individuals, and is consequently more bitter in its nature, and more injurious in its results.

But the greatest argument against these distinctions is the difficulty, not to say the impossibility, of maintaining a high standard for the first, or exclusive class, for want, as I before observed, of sufficient material for its formation. The small circle of government officials is scarcely sufficient of itself to constitute a class, and with the exception of these a new colony is composed almost entirely of working men, tradesmen, farmers, and labourers. There are no men of leisure; literature and the fine arts have neither scope nor opportunity for their development; time and means are wanting for the cultivation of the elegancies and refinements of domestic or social life.

The attempt, therefore, to establish an aristocratical pre-eminence is at once vain and absurd, and only ends in fostering that worst of dynasties, a plutocracy. As the colony grows and strengthens, and ripens into a nation, the various elements of its society will gradually fall into their natural order; the ornamental parts in all their gracefulness will then appear like tracery, adding beauty and lightness to a building already firm and solid, and combining to form "one harmonious whole."

The peculiar position of Maritzburg, that of an English town rising out of the ruins of a Dutch *dorp* or village, tends to make the evils to which I have alluded more apparent. The obstacles to a cordial intercourse naturally arising from difference of language and national customs, are here heightened by the irritation unavoidably created in the minds of the losing party against those who have superseded them, and still further by the distrust which our subsequent treatment of them has unfortunately occasioned. So strong is this feeling, that to many it appears quite unsurmountable, and certainly the task of conciliating a Dutchman is generally attended with such difficulty, that even the kindest and best-intentioned Englishmen have abandoned it in despair. Still, much might be done towards so desirable an end, if those who are acquainted with the language, and from long residence in the colony, from constant intercourse with the Dutch in the way of business, and sometimes from having formed connections among them, hold, as it were, the link between them and their own countrymen, would use their influence to bring them together. As it is, they but help to widen the breach. Espousing with great vehemence the side on which their sympathies have been enlisted, they are ever meditating or inciting attack, and keeping alive the flames of discord. Those indeed, and they are not a few, who from conviction or association adopt the cause of the Dutch, go beyond them in the violence and absurdity of their prejudices, and in their contempt and jealousy of English intrusion. The effect of all this is to encourage a party spirit, which would otherwise have died away, but which will now endure while a single Dutchman remains in the colony. Our *table d'hôte* was often the scene of disputes on this eternal subject, ending, as such disputes invariably do, in every one's retaining his opinion and losing his temper.

As an instance of the false ideas that have thus found their way into circulation, I may mention that the word "emigrant" had fallen quite into discredit, and had become almost a term of reproach. Having a habit of calling persons and things by their right names, and being ignorant of this particular prejudice, I was unfortunate enough to give great offence to a lady of my acquaintance by the casual application of the proscribed word. The toss of the head, and the tone in which "Emigrant, indeed!" was uttered, were a history in themselves, and not without a moral.

Our simple predecessors little understood these distinctions, nor were they adepts at such ingenious devices for self-deception or self-aggrandizement; yet those who know Maritzburg during their occupation, say that in that quiet little republic there was more interchange of hospitality, more of those *réunions* which promote harmony and good feeling, nay, more gaiety than, with all the *éclat* of a Government and a Governor, is to be found among the present inhabitants. Not that there are wanting amiable and agreeable persons, or pleasant families, but that they lack the bond which should unite them, and are unable to co-operate, either for amusement or for more practical and useful purposes. Unfortunately, too, the Lieutenant-Governor, whose courtesy and affability have made him very generally popular among all classes, is as yet unmarried, and is thus prevented from fully exerting the influence he possesses on the society of the town. For this evil, however, we may always hope a remedy, Maritzburg being by no means destitute of female attractions, as her Majesty's gallant officers, several of whom have here met their fate, can bear witness.

The learned professions do not as yet occupy a very important place. The Church has much to contend with, the field being preoccupied by dissenting missionaries; but it has some earnest supporters, and a zealous minister in the person of my excellent friend, the Rev. J. Green. Divine service is for the present performed in the Government school-room, but a new church is to be erected as soon as sufficient funds have been obtained. The plan is chaste and correct, it is to be built of the sandstone of the country, which is abundant and works well. Independently of the high object and character of such a work, the employment it will afford to a number of distressed labouring emigrants, whom a rash and ill-digested system of speculation has poured into the country, gives it an additional claim upon the church at home; and those who have both the power and will to assist in the propagation of the Gospel, cannot err in giving it their assistance and encouragement.

Natal is in the diocese of the Bishop of Cape Town, and had been visited by that prelate in his progress through the vast district committed to his charge some time before my arrival. The immense distance, however—nearly 2000 miles—between the two extremities (the island of St. Helena being also included), and the huge tract of almost uninhabited ground which intervenes, point out the inconvenience of this arrangement. An interesting account of the Bishop's journey, from his own pen, has lately been published by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and the idea which it conveys of the magnitude and importance of the work before him, even though measured by the untiring zeal and energy which he has brought to bear upon it, affords a still further proof of the inadequate provision for the spiritual wants of the people. His earnest call for help will surely find a response, and I trust the day is not far distant, when Natal will have an increased number of clergy, and a separate Bishop of its own.

The law, thanks to John Bull's litigious spirit, is much more numerously represented, and is ably presided over by the Supreme Judge, Mr. Cloete, Recorder of Natal, whose decisions in civil cases, where trial by jury is not admitted, appear to give general satisfaction. Criminal cases are tried by a jury of nine; they are not often of a very serious nature, the chief offenders being drunken Hottentots and discharged soldiers. The ordinary punishment is working in chains on the road.

The natives, except in criminal cases, are allowed, to a certain extent, to retain their own laws, which are administered by magistrates appointed for that purpose by the Lieutenant-Governor, and acting under the superintendence of Mr. Shepstone, the Diplomatic Agent with the native tribes.

The established law of the colony is the Dutch Roman law, which though needing reformation in several essential points, is in many respects well suited to the wants of an infant community. Actions for debt are among the most fruitful causes of litigation, and give employment to a whole host of attorneys, who, being all allowed to plead, do not contribute much to the dignity of the profession. Their bills, too, are no exception to the universal rule. An amusing instance of this occurred to a friend of mine, who, having been charged twenty-five pounds for the drawing up of a lease which ought not to have cost five pounds, and objecting to pay so exorbitant a demand, was immediately presented with a receipt in full,—the attorney preferring to cancel the debt, with an air of integrity, rather than admit himself to be in the wrong by abating his claim. Nor is the union of many different employments thought prejudicial to success in any one business or profession. It might not be impossible to find united in one individual the various functions of lawyer, sectarian preacher, editor, store-keeper, agent, and politician, all discharged with equal energy and punctuality, and really serving rather to assist than interfere with each other. Do you want a horse? Your attorney has one at a low figure, made on purpose for you. Has your own animal a sore back or any other disease? or is he a confirmed kicker? Your attorney will play the veterinary surgeon or rough-rider for you with equal skill and confidence; and should either remedy fail, will assist you in getting rid of the useless encumbrance. Have you need of anything—from a wagon to a spade, from a house to a clasp knife?—your attorney, if you choose aright, shall supply your wants, and save you much time and trouble; I do not add money;—that is another question.

In spite of the boasted healthiness of the climate, doctors cannot be dispensed with, and there are two or three in regular practice in the town; but, as several have betaken themselves to farming or other occupations, I conclude that they had no great chance of making a fortune by the mere exercise of their profession. Dysentery is the most prevalent disease, and the most obstinate; but it is not the only one, for I heard of a medical man who, being questioned as to his prospects of employment, replied that there was "a pretty sprinkling of rheumatism." Medicines of all kinds are excessively dear, although many of the most useful, such as senna, sarsaparilla, and castor oil, &c., abound in the colony; and I have no doubt that a careful search might bring to light a store of healing virtue, hitherto unknown, which might prove a valuable addition to our pharmacopœia. That the Kafirs have in use several herbs and plants with which we are not acquainted, is certain; and that they are by no means inexpert in the treatment of wounds and diseases, both surgical and medical, I can vouch from personal experience, as well as from hearsay and observation. My leg continuing to give me great pain and inconvenience, and defying every authorized prescription, it occurred to me that the evil being a local one the remedy would probably be found in the same neighbourhood, and that it would be known to the natives. Accordingly, I determined, without delay, to consult our host's chief Kafir servant, an intelligent lad of fifteen or sixteen, who, having been in the service of one of the officers of the garrison, had picked up some slight notion of civilized habits, and a tolerable smattering of the English language, which he pronounced very correctly. He had quite astonished me, a day or two before, on my asking him to take a message for me, by replying in a deep, but sufficiently clear voice, "Wait a bit, Sir, till I clean the boots!"

I must confess, by the way, that the facility with which these savages acquire both the English and Dutch languages quite puts to shame the intellectual superiority of the white man, and goes far to justify those who would attribute to them an equal share of mental capacity.

Jack was certainly no beauty; but he was a powerful-looking fellow, though not tall, and his wide mouth was distended with a perpetual grin of good humour. We were already very good friends, but I thought it prudent to give him an interest in the case, and offered him a shilling in case of success. After a grave inspection of the place, and some consultation with a fellow-servant who was standing by, he took a pinch of snuff from the hollow nut which served him for a box, and said that he knew something which would ease it, but that it grew a long way off, and that he would go out early next morning to fetch it.

I had not risen the following morning, when the calico curtain that formed my bed-room door was moved aside, a dark figure noiselessly entered, and a gruff voice said, in the barbarous mixture of English, Dutch, and Kafir, used by the colonists in their intercourse with the natives, "Jack come mak muschla umlunga"—(make well white man). He carried in his hand a round, green, prickly fruit, about the size of an orange, which he called *Tuma*, a rusty nail, and a knife. After cutting open the fruit, he poured in some water, and, having stirred it well with the nail till the inside was softened, proceeded with the same delicate instrument to apply the pulp to the part effected, and all this with as much gravity and method as if he had been performing a grand operation. I can only add, that after repeating the application two or three times, I was once more set upon my feet, and for the present, at least, perfectly cured.

But of all professions, the most prosperous and lucrative is that of the Government Surveyor. His employment, and consequently his gains, are not limited by the wants or caprices of his clients; his pay is ample, and though not always prompt, is sure. The nature of his occupation, which keeps him ever in the open air, renders it at once healthy and interesting. To him alone the real beauties of Natal scenery are unveiled. Mounted on his trusty steed, his theodolite strapped upon his shoulder, he penetrates wooded valleys which the eye of the traveller or tourist has never seen, and whose very existence is unknown but to the wandering savage; or tracks the course of some crystal stream, through all its mazy windings, from its rocky source in the mountains to the bed of slime and sand at its mouth. He knows the inaccessible nooks and corners, for such there are, in which Nature delights to hide her choicest gems from the vulgar gaze, and which those who follow the beaten path are seldom permitted to discover.

His home, sometimes for many months, may be his wagon or tent; or, mayhap, if his stay in one place should be prolonged, a Kafir hut or deserted farm-house. But he carries with him most of the comforts, and often the luxuries, of civilized life, and is exposed to none of the hardships or privations which many would deem inseparable from such circumstances. Nor need he, if a married man, be without the society of his family; his wife may, and often does, accompany him, and his young ones return with sun-burnt faces and sturdy frames that contrast forcibly with those of the better preserved, but less hardy, children of the town. His work, meanwhile, is not difficult, nor does it require any extraordinary amount of attention or ability. No large and expensive apparatus, no very close or accurate measurements are necessary; there are no "offsets" to be made. The farms are divided, wherever it is possible, by natural boundaries, and their limits marked by beacons on elevated positions: but an acre more or less, in six thousand, is of no great importance, and the minute details, with which our railway surveyors are familiar, would be here superfluous.

From these causes, an excellent opening is afforded for young men, such, indeed, as in the palmiest days of railway projects was scarcely to be commanded without high talent and reputation; and the profession is so popular, that it is in great danger of being overstocked. The only test required, beyond the ordinary testimonials, is that the candidate should pass a previous examination,—no very formidable barrier,—after which the way is clear before him, and with common prudence and economy his position is secured, and a comfortable independence, if not a fortune, is in his grasp. A young friend of mine, sharp and clever, but without any practical experience, made £300 during the first six months of his residence here; and those who have obtained greater proficiency are easily able to clear from £800 to £1000 a-year, without devoting more than nine months out of the twelve to their professional duties.

This harvest-time can, of course, only last as long as the work remains unfinished, and the continued arrival of emigrants renders it necessary; but some years must elapse before the whole of Natal can be brought into occupation, and the days of the surveyors shall have passed by. At present they are the princes of the colony; their credit is high, their bills are more negotiable than those of the best mercantile houses, they ride the finest horses, live on the fat of the land, and are independent of all contingencies, save a Government bankruptcy, which, I trust, is not a very likely occurrence.

Besides the Kafir police, whom I shall mention hereafter, there are several white men employed for the maintenance of order and good behaviour in the town. The extent of their duty is to give a night's lodging in the *tronk*, or gaol, to some overtaken citizen, whose potations may chance to evaporate too noisily.

The streets, however, are occasionally tenanted by monsters of another kind. Going one dark night to a friend's house, and keeping in the middle of the road to avoid the "sloots," I stumbled over some unseen obstacle, and suddenly found myself between the horns of a very unpleasant dilemma, in the shape of a large black ox, one of a lot of fourteen that were reposing undisturbed in front of their owner's house, and blocking up the whole street, to the no small danger of her Majesty's liege subjects. I have a great mind to say to whom they belonged, but "βοῦς ἐπὶ γλώσσῃ μέγας," so I shall hold my tongue.

These same streets of Maritzburg, by the by, are in wet weather as impassable as the country roads. Walking is no joke, and riding is positively dangerous, the horse's feet being literally taken from under him, and the animal frequently falling so suddenly and completely, that the rider incurs the risk of a serious accident. A light wagon or omnibus has lately been imported from England by one of the most enterprising colonists (a lawyer of course), for the purpose of carrying passengers from one end of the town to the other, a distance of nearly a mile and a half; but I fear that, unless for occasional hire, it is not likely to pay its expenses. It is something, however, to see horses in harness; for, with the exception of a couple of pony-phætons, an Irish jaunting-car, and the baker's cart, and, perhaps, now and then a Dutch horse-wagon from some distant farm, no attempt has been made to supersede the Cape wagon, with its long team of patient, slow-moving oxen.

A light carriage of this kind is much wanted on the road from D'Urban to Maritzburg, to insure a regular and rapid communication between the port and the principal town. The mails are carried by a mounted orderly, and one horse will frequently accomplish the journey in eight hours; but for those to whom this means of locomotion is inaccessible the journey is, as we have seen, long and tedious. The ready and certain conveyance of small parcels, and the lighter kinds of merchandize, would be a great boon to the shopkeepers, as also to the public at large, the price of all imported goods being at present nearly twenty-five per cent. higher at Maritzburg than at D'Urban. The carriage of fresh fish, which abound in the bay, would alone go far towards defraying the expenses of the journey; and, while supplying the inhabitants of the capital with a wholesome variation to their everlasting beef diet, would, at the same time, afford encouragement to the fisheries of the sea-coast, which are now almost entirely neglected, but which contain inexhaustible resources, and might become a profitable object of trade.

The attention of the colonists, moreover, would thus be turned to the improvement of their horses, which are now ill-suited for draught, though in many other respects peculiarly fitted for the country and for the work which they have to perform. The Natal horse, indeed, deserves something more than a mere passing notice.

He is a small, and by no means a showy animal, nor does he possess any of the points for which an Englishman would look in a good hunter or hackney. His shoulder is very much depressed, and the withers are generally so low that when on his back you have, to use a familiar expression, "nothing before you," and it is no easy matter to keep the saddle in its proper place. He is very narrow in the ribs, so much so that an English saddle, unless made by one who thoroughly understands the matter, and well stuffed, is sure to gall the back—the worst evil that can happen to an African horse. To avoid this a false pannel is often added, and saddle-cloths are in very general use, but as they increase the heat it is better to do without them if possible. The trash which English shopkeepers are in the habit of sending out as export saddlery has been the ruin of many a fine animal, and has brought great discredit on our wares. So well do the old colonists know this, that they will hardly look at a saddle unless it bears a name well known and esteemed at the Cape. Peacomb is their great favourite, but any good tradesman, under proper directions, can furnish you with the right article. Mine was made by Messrs. Milroy, of Cornhill, and was one of the best in the colony. There is now an excellent saddler at Maritzburg, in connection with Peats's establishment; he was one of the unfortunate Minerva passengers, and lost all his stock in the wreck, but he is a hard-working and attentive tradesman, and, as his work is remarkably good, he is likely to meet with the success which his perseverance deserves.

The hind-quarters of the Natal horse resemble those of some of our Irish hunters, except that they are more angular and unsightly. The legs are short and muscular. As there is no deep ground, and no fences, curbs seldom, if ever, make their appearance; splints are common, but rarely produce lameness; indeed a horse unsound in wind or limb is a rarity. Considering their size, and the natural degeneration of the breed from want of fresh crosses, the amount of work they are capable of performing is really astonishing. I have frequently known them accomplish upwards of seventy miles within the day, and that with fourteen stone upon their back. More than this has been done; but they should be rested and relieved of the saddle at least once in every three hours, and should never be pressed above their natural pace, which on a journey is reckoned at about six miles per hour. When put to the mettle, as in the chase, they are not deficient in speed, and are remarkably active in scrambling among rocks, loose stones, or precipitous and broken ground, and in avoiding the numerous holes which constitute the chief danger of African hunting.

They are easily shod; nor are shoes required, unless for long journeys over hard-beaten roads. They are very hardy, and are never better than when in work and turned out to graze in healthy situations. Low rich valleys, where the pasturage is most luxuriant, do not suit them, and it is in such places that the disease of which I have before spoken is most frequent and fatal. When kept in the town they are fed principally upon oat hay, which should be chopped small to avoid waste. Indian corn is also used, both as dry and green food; in the former state it is heating, and should be given sparingly. At hotels, &c., the charge for horses at livery is from 2s. 6d. to 3s. per diem.

The unhealthy season is the latter part of February, March, and April, when the grass is in seed and beginning to turn colour. It is thought, too, that the dews, which are very heavy, are at all times unwholesome; but I cannot say that I have ever observed this to be the case. The following plan was recommended to me by a colonist of twelve years' experience, who had always found it successful in preventing disease and keeping his horses in good condition, viz., to turn them out in the day-time and keep them in at night during the summer months, reversing the process in the winter. The theory of this treatment is to allot in each case the larger portion of the twenty-four hours to grazing, to preserve the animal from the danger of unwholesome night-dews in summer, and to supply the deficiency of pasturage in winter by giving him plenty of dry food in the stable.

Riding-horses when turned out are generally well haltered; but, even when this precaution has not been taken, a Kafir will seldom be long in finding and driving them in.

Their favourite pace is a short ambling canter, which they will keep up for hours. Those who possess this accomplishment to perfection are in high estimation among the Dutch, who call them *trippelaars*. They are no great walkers, and a trotter is a rarity. When well broken they make good ladies' horses; but unfortunately this important requirement is seldom fulfilled, too many colts being spoiled both in mouth and temper by injudicious treatment and the use of sharp bits—a very popular colonial fallacy. Among the vicious tricks which they are thus allowed to acquire is that of "bucking," a mode of emptying the saddle practised also, I believe, by the Australian horses, and certainly a most expeditious one. It consists in dropping the head between the fore-legs, arching up the back like that of an enraged cat, and twisting rapidly round, performing all the while a series of tricks and plunges which would unseat a Centaur. I have but two pieces of advice to give on this head. First, never mount a bucking horse if you know it; secondly, the moment your horse begins to buck throw yourself off. It is just possible that by leaning backwards, and pulling hard on the curb, you may succeed in keeping his head up and frustrating his evil intentions; but when once the head is down it is all over, and you may just as well follow the example of the Coon, "come down and give in."

The price varies from £10 to £25 and £30, but nothing tolerable can be had under £15. On a late occasion, when it became necessary to remount the artillery, which had been unhorsed by order of the late Lieutenant-Governor, the maximum allowed by Government for the purchase of each horse was £26, and few, I fancy, were bought very much cheaper.

At present Natal is not a good breeding country, and all the best horses are brought over land from the frontiers of the old colony by traders, who find it a very profitable speculation; but there are now many upland farms on which they may be reared with perfect safety, and nothing is needed but a few judicious importations from England to insure an improved and useful race of animals, which would not only supply the wants of the colony, but become a valuable article of export to India.

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CHAPTER V.

THE AUCTION—A QUEER LOT—MR. OTTO'S FARM—KAFIR LABOUR—MULE-BREEDING—HIPPOPOTAMI PRESERVE—A NEW ACQUAINTANCE AND AN OLD FRIEND—CHANGE OF PLACES—TENT IN THE MARKET-PLACE—THE WAGON WHIP.—COLONIAL SYMBOLS—AFRICAN WAGON—STORM—TERRIBLE EFFECTS OF LIGHTNING.

SINCE the "trekking" of the Dutch farmers from Natal, Maritzburg can scarcely be said to have a regular market. Its substitute is the auction, which takes place every Saturday, and is the great rendezvous of the whole neighbourhood. For a study of colonial character, you cannot find a fitter opportunity or a better place than the front of Mr. Fereira's, in Church Street. In Natal everything is done in the open air, nor is this an exception. Mounted upon that long table, covered with a more incongruous assemblage of merchandize than ever appeared in a Wardour Street shop, his official hammer in his hand, is a pleasant-looking little man, in a brown coat. That is Mr. Fereira himself, our amiable and worthy auctioneer. Long may he occupy his chair! How his quiet eye ranges through the crowd, selecting the most likely purchasers for each article, and charming, as if by some spell, the hesitating bidder into the fear of competition! How instantly the nod or the raised finger is interpreted and answered! But let us glance at the catalogue.

Here is a dinner-set, fit for a London dining-room! It was brought out by a gentleman emigrant, who finds that tin pannikins and plates answer his purpose on the farm much better. It will not want purchasers, though, among the Maritzburg householders. Here is a Mortimer rifle, value £30; it will perhaps fetch £10. Here is a comparatively worthless piece, ornamented (or, as some would think, disfigured) with brass or german-silver mounting: there will be no loss upon this. Here are bags of imported flour and rice, brass bedsteads, a wheelbarrow, a looking-glass, a plough, a collection of books, a wardrobe; and, can it be? Yes!—a pair of skates! Well, it *does* freeze sometimes, and pretty sharply too; besides, we may live to see a glaciarium.

Nor is the moving portion of the show less motley. I will wager you never saw such various crafts lying alongside of each other before. There is the true Dutch build, all hull, and, pardon me, rather round in the stern; there is something of the Yankee clipper—evidently all for speed, if not for lasting, and carrying no useless top-hamper, one of the real go-a-head sort; yonder is a trim yacht, with rather more of show than use about it, but all a-tanto, and carrying crowds of canvas; here is a nondescript that might find its type in the Chinese junk, so outlandish is its appearance; there is the British trader, with all necessary sail set, and everything in its place, quiet and orderly; there are rough, homely, but honest coasters, surrounded by all sorts of piratical-looking vessels, carrying anything but their own colours; and crowds of small vessels exhibiting every possible variety of build and rig. As for the latter—to drop the metaphor—you will see every degree between the full dress of the officer and the undress of the Zulu—jackets predominating especially among the farmers and equestrians from the country.

The sale, after all, is to many little more than the ostensible plea for a morning lounge, answering all the purposes of a club. Here are discussed the news of the week, the scandal of the town, the arrival of the last ship and the contents of the mail, the state of the crops, the price of provisions, the land question, and the latest Government measure.

On the industrial population, however, a great benefit is conferred by the facility thus afforded of turning property of any kind into ready cash. Hither the storekeeper brings the least saleable though not perhaps the worst part of his stock, which would otherwise remain profitless upon his hands. Here the farmer brings his cattle or produce, secure of a fair average price, and, what is more important, of its due payment. Here, too, the reduced emigrant brings the superfluities of his home outfit,—too often its necessaries also,—that he may obtain wherewith to carry on the struggle which disappointed expectations, want of requisite means, total unfitness for the task he has undertaken, or perhaps his own folly or ill-conduct, have combined to render almost hopeless. Not that I would be understood to infer such to be the necessary consequence of emigration, unless misdirected and abused; but of this hereafter.

Among my fellow-boarders I was fortunate in making the acquaintance of three brothers, who had come out with the intention of farming, but had since adopted other occupations more congenial to their taste. In pursuance of their first design, and with a view to make themselves acquainted with the mode of tillage, &c., practised in the country, two of them had resided for some months on the farm of a Dutch proprietor in the neighbourhood, where they were instructed in the mysteries of Natal agriculture, giving their work as an equivalent for their board; an excellent arrangement, wherein the mutual advantages of instruction on the one hand, and labour on the other, were combined, with the rarer additamenta of a pleasant home, and the society of educated and agreeable people. As I was also interested in the subject of farming, my new friends strongly advised me to follow the same course, to which I was by no means disinclined; and as their late host was in the habit of coming into town every Saturday, they took the opportunity of introducing me to him. My plans afterwards took a different form, and I was only the gainer by another very pleasant acquaintance; but had circumstances permitted, I am convinced that I could not have spent a few months at once more pleasantly and profitably than at Mr. Otto's.

The farm on which that gentlemen resides (for he is the owner of several) is situated on the banks of the Umgeni, about ten miles distance from Maritzburg, and probably contains nearly 6000 acres. At least fifty of these,—an unusually large proportion,—are under cultivation, and produce fine crops of Indian corn, oats, potatoes, &c., the remainder affording pasturage to large herds of cattle, the Dutch farmer's chief source of wealth, and yielding, besides, a considerable profit in the bush with which it is covered, and which is sold for firewood in the town.

Mr. Otto encourages the settling of native families on his land, and has been more successful than many of his neighbours in obtaining their steady and continuous labour, his numerous stock enabling him not only to supply them with abundance of milk, of which they are very fond, but to pay them with young heifers, which, as the means of purchasing wives, are to them a most tempting reward.

He has devoted much time and attention to the breeding of mules, for which there is a good market at the Mauritius; but though he has succeeded in rearing several of good quality, I do not think the speculation proved very lucrative, one great drawback being the extreme wildness and intractability of the young animals, and the difficulty of breaking them.

Game is abundant, and the weekly chase rarely fails to add a dainty ourebi (*A. scoparia*), or fat riet bok (*A. eleotragus*), to the contents of the larder; but should that fail, there is a nearer resource at hand. What does the reader think of a preserve of hippopotami, within gunshot of the house, like the moor-hens in a lake at the bottom of an English garden? But there they are, among the reeds of the Umgeni,—ready for a "waltz" with any adventurous son of Nimrod, who shall dare the encounter,—to the number of eight or ten, and likely to increase, for Mr. Otto preserves them strictly, and, except on grand occasions, they remain undisturbed.

They form, indeed, by no means a contemptible article of food, their flesh resembling that of pork, and the fat (*zee koe spek*) being in high estimation in the Dutch cuisine, as an accompaniment to the antelope venison, which is mostly lean and dry.

It was not fated, however, that I should become an inmate of this Dutch Arcadia. My plans, as I before hinted, underwent a sudden revolution, and this was effected by one of those incidents which appear strange, but are of every day occurrence in a roving life.

I had been about a fortnight in Maritzburg, and was just restored to the use of my limbs, when one evening I found myself seated at the dinner table by the side of a gentleman just arrived by the overland route from Algoa Bay. The conversation turning on home matters, as is always the case when two Englishmen meet in a foreign country, we were soon discussing subjects of mutual interest, and chatting of mutual acquaintances as though we had been known to each other of old, when, as if to complete what was so pleasantly begun, a reply to some accidental question of mine disclosed the unexpected intelligence that his *compagnon de voyage* was an old friend, whom I had lost sight of for many years, and of whose presence in Africa I had never even dreamed. They had left Algoa Bay three months previously, with the view of selecting a spot for a farm, and, crossing the Orange River, had traversed the northern sovereignty and descended the Draakenberg into Natal. The Ouerberg country, however, pleasing them most, they were about to return thither, and hoped to leave Maritzburg in a few days.

A journey through the centre and beyond the boundaries of Natal! a pleasant companion, and an old friend! Such an opportunity might never occur again, and I at once resolved, if possible, to join their party. My proposal was received with a hearty welcome, the only objection being the impossibility of making the wagon a bed-room for three, which was disposed of by my preference for a less confined sleeping-place on the open "*veld*."

Though staying in a town, my friends had made no alteration in the mode of living which they had practised during the journey, and their encampment would have appeared strange indeed in the eyes of a London citizen. They had pitched their tent in the centre of the market-place, by the side of the wagon, which had been emptied of its contents in order to undergo some repairs, having been overturned in crossing the Suurberg, a chain of mountains lying between Algoa Bay and Somerset in the old colony. The kitchen fire was lighted as usual on the grass, for they did not patronize the inns; and around it were strewed numerous articles little known to refined life. Two half-drunken Hottentots, with large ostrich feathers twined round their straw hats, might be seen hanging lazily about, perhaps occupied in splicing a new *trecktouw*, a trace made of plaited stripes of hide, or putting a new *voorslag* (lash) to the wagon-whip, that its smack might be clear and loud.

To produce this sound from an African whip is a high colonial accomplishment, and like the cast of the fly-rod, or the catch of the thong, cannot be attained without habitual practice. Indeed its immense length of fourteen feet in the stock, with a lash of perhaps twenty-five feet, renders it as awkward an instrument in the hands of a novice as it is a terribly efficient one in the hands of an adept. Standing on the fore-part of the wagon, our driver, Aaron, shall with equal facility draw blood from one of the leaders in a span of fourteen, "some forty feet him fro," or flank the "achter os" immediately beneath his feet.

It is curious to notice how the characters of soil and climate in our different colonies, the nature of the work to be performed in each, and the habits which result from them, are illustrated by particular implements, each of which might serve as an appropriate emblem of the country in which it is used. Australia has her stock-whip, with short handle and tremendous thong, formed for equestrian use, with which the active squatter pursues his herds of half-wild cattle in headlong chase over her boundless plains: Canada may be known at once by the narrow axe, by whose stroke her mighty forests are subdued—the never-failing weapon of the stout back-woodsman: and Africa has her wagon-whip, type of no useful employment, but too true a representation of what have hitherto been the habits of her people, telling of tedious journeys and desultory wanderings, homesteads neglected, and farms half cultivated; a scattered and divided population, an unsettled frontier, and a territory so extensive that it can neither be occupied, governed, nor protected by those to whom it belongs.

The expert use, too, of each of these implements consists in a peculiar knack, which is best acquired in childhood; and, while in Canada, you may see an urchin of eight years old perched upon a huge maple log, wielding with ease and dexterity an axe nearly as heavy as himself, in Africa the Dutch child is smacking a gigantic wagon-whip with equal facility, and urging an imaginary span of refractory oxen with shrieks and yells which none but a Dutchman or a Hottentot can imitate, and none but an African ox understand.

For the next few days all was active preparation, stores were laid in, guns were overhauled, bullets melted, covers made for the saddles, to preserve them from injury, rough clothes hunted out, and finery put aside. Lastly, the wagon was loaded, and—fitted up with side and fore-chests, pockets for stray articles, and slings for guns—began to assume a habitable appearance.

A Cape wagon is already so well known, through the medium of African travellers, that I need not enter into a minute description of it. The specimens in Mr Gordon Cumming's exhibition must have made many of my readers familiar with its peculiar construction. For those, however, who have not seen it, I may just mention that its chief principles are strength and looseness. This latter quality is essential to its resistance to the numerous shocks it is destined to encounter, which would otherwise soon cause its destruction. As it is, each part yields to a blow or strain, and a breakage seldom occurs. Its length, at a rough guess, is about twelve feet, its breadth inside from three and a half to four feet. It is principally made from the stink wood (*laurus bullata*), which is of great strength, and if well seasoned lasts a long time. This precaution is very necessary, as the extreme dryness of the atmosphere in the interior of the country rapidly absorbs all the moisture of the wood, causing it to shrink and spring apart at the seams. In damp weather the wood swells again, and all appears taut and sound, and of this circumstance the unprincipled wagon-builder often takes advantage to deceive the unwary purchaser, sometimes resorting to artificial means to produce the desired effect.

Most of the Boers construct their own wagons, though there are some who make it their especial business, and are famous throughout Africa for the excellence of their workmanship. The price of a new wagon at the Cape is from £70 to £80; at Algoa Bay something more, and in Natal, where skilled labour is dear, the lowest price is £100. Ours had cost £75 at Algoa Bay, and, as it had been standing for twelve months in the sun, was thoroughly seasoned. It was considered a great bargain, as it eventually proved, being sold on the borders of Natal, after a year's constant use, for £70.

The evening before our start the town of Maritzburg was visited by one of the most tremendous thunder-storms it has ever been my lot to witness. The Americans are wont to "brag" (if one can use such a term without impiety) of their thunder and lightning, but a Natal storm far surpasses in grandeur and sublimity anything of the kind that I have seen elsewhere, unless perhaps at sea, when another element combines to heighten the effect, and where, from the exposed situation, and the sense of danger attending it, one is more open to the impressions which such a scene is calculated to produce. On this occasion the hills around seemed literally on fire, so rapidly did flash succeed flash, each appearing rather to rise out of the earth than to descend upon it, while the rattling peals of thunder immediately overhead threatened to burst the very ears of the listener. The rain, too, descended in rivers, converting the whole town into a swamp, and nearly washing my friends out of their tent. The abundance of iron in the soil may, in some degree, account for the frequency and fury of these storms, which are occasionally attended by disastrous effects; but it is the opinion of many that as the country becomes more occupied they will decrease, and that they are even now less violent than they were a few years ago when it was first settled. Not long before my arrival, however, twelve oxen, out of a herd, were killed by one stroke on a road near the town, where the bones still lie to attest the fearful catastrophe, and I myself witnessed the destruction of some buildings attached to Port Napier by the electric fluid. The smoke which rose from the thatched roof was almost simultaneous with the flash, and the flames spread so rapidly that before I could throw the saddle on my horse and gallop to the spot the whole of the wood-work had been consumed to the bare walls, and it was only by the prompt exertions of the soldiery that some of the property within was rescued from the overthrow.

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CHAPTER VI.

OUR PARTY—THE TREK—A JIB—FIRST OUTSPAN—THE UMGENI FALLS—DUTCH PILGRIMS—MOOI RIVER—MY SLEEPING APARTMENT—BUSHMAN'S RIVER—THE BOSJES MEN—VISIT TO A DUTCHMAN—I'VE DONE THE ENGLISHMAN—ANTE-NUPTIAL CONTRACTS—COUNTRY QUARTERS—MR. P—— AND THE PREMIER—KAFIR BUTCHERS—BATHING—COCKNEY SHOP-KEEPERS—OUR SPAN—TREACHEROUS MURDER OF THE DUTCH BY DINGAAN—THE TUGELA—PICTURESQUE SCENERY—NATAL STONY DESERTS—DUTCH EXILES—HORSES LOST—CROSSING THE KLIP—DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAKENBERG—A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY—THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN—OUREBIS—SCHUTKRAAL—A NIGHT IN THE VELD.

It is indispensable to the harmony and comfort of an expedition such as we contemplated, that the party should have an acknowledged leader, and this post was occupied by my old friend Darnell, whose two years' residence in the old colony, and perfect acquaintance with the Dutch language, peculiarly fitted him for it. His great personal strength and determination were also useful qualities in a country where the milder forms of persuasion are apt to fail, and they have since gained him honourable mention among the volunteers in the Kafir war. My new acquaintance, Barkley, was the youngest and most active among us, and in all difficulties and emergencies prompt and energetic. For myself I was not yet sufficiently recovered to be of much service, and was little more than an additional weight.

Our cargo consisted of our luggage, beds and bedding, our provisions, tea, sugar, flour, salt, &c., and some fresh meat to begin with, saddles and bridles, two rifles, four double-barrelled guns, and a large Dutch piece, or *roer*, with plenty of powder, buck-shot, *loopers*, or slugs, and bars of lead, hardened with tin; a chest of tools, a medicine-chest (with which Barkley had already established a reputation among the Boers), our tent, a folding-table, and chairs, and a good stock of tobacco and pipes, completed our equipment.

Three horses, in very poor condition, but a little improved by a month's run at Maritzburg, followed the wagon, to which they were fastened by *riems* or thongs of hide, the general substitute for cord in this country. Nor must I omit our canine followers, of whom there were four. Nero, a handsome tawny dog, with something of the English mastiff, something of the large stag-hound about him; Volteur, a fawn-coloured long-muzzled animal, between a lurcher and deer-hound; Kafirland, a long-haired Kafir bitch, of any, or rather no breed at all; and last, not least, Pinch, an enormous, ugly, brindled, butcher-like cur, who had of his own accord joined the wagon, *medio itinere*, and remained with it ever since. I say *it*, for it was to the wagon alone that he showed any signs of attachment, keeping so close to it that he was perpetually getting his foot under the wheel. He received the name of "Pinch" from his starved appearance.

"There came one Pinch, a lean and hungry villain."

He was now, however, in good case, having, during his stay in Maritzburg, wisely taken up his quarters at the butcher's, and lived on the fat of the land.

I am sorry to add that a more useless set of creatures I never saw. In open ground they invariably spoiled our chance of a quiet shot by dashing in upon the game, and showed great reluctance to hunt the *kloofs* where their assistance was really wanted. Nor, with the exception of Pinch, can I say much for their courage. The fact is, that dogs are very apt to degenerate when taken out to Africa, and I have reason to believe that the finest breeds are most affected by the climate. One or two fox-hounds have been imported into Natal, and some good sport has been had with the jackal, who has sometimes afforded a run of eight or ten miles; but for the various descriptions of antelope, and indeed for all four-footed game, the lurcher on a large scale is found to succeed best. For the larger beasts of prey the best dog is one that will keep at a respectful distance, as the high-mettled animal is sure to fall a victim to his temerity. A good breed of pointers would be the most valuable importation, as the country swarms with birds of the partridge and pheasant tribe, which it is very difficult to find in the long grass.

I had really forgotten our biped attendants, though I scarcely know whether they deserve any priority of mention over the quadrupeds. Darnell's white servant was one of those strange instances which one occasionally sees of the result of varied travel on an illiterate mind. He was a German by birth, had been an English sailor, and had since lived much among the Dutch. He had lost his own language, but retained just enough of it to impart its idiom to his English, which was a most absurd medley. Mackenzie, for he borrowed his name from a fourth country, was a good cook, and useful servant on the *trek*, but, like most of his class, an inveterate drunkard when in a town. During their stay in Maritzburgh, Darnell finding strong measures necessary, had treated him to a sound thrashing and a day's lodging in the *tronk*, and he was now full of promises of good behaviour.

Our driver and leader, or *voor looper*, were both Hottentots, and were average specimens of their race; expert in all that pertained to the management of a wagon, and when properly (*i.e.* severely) treated, capital servants, but lazy when they could escape notice, and impudent when they could be so with impunity.

From this point I have extracted from my journal such notes of our *trek* as I have thought would be interesting to the reader, and would serve to present a tolerable picture of a tour in South Africa.

October 1.—Inspanned about noon, and after many delays got clear of the town. Our route lay right over one of the highest of the hills which bound Maritzburg on the north and north-west, and as the road is perhaps one of the worst in the colony, we soon had a specimen of the difficulties we were destined to encounter. On one of the steepest pitches our oxen stuck, and a scene ensued which none but an African traveller can imagine. The oxen twisting round in the yoke, facing all ways, and presenting a mass of seemingly inextricable confusion, some dropping down on their knees, others rolling over to the imminent risk of strangling themselves before the *riems* can be loosened that tie them to the yoke; Hottentots rushing to and fro, urging them with unearthly shouts, yells, and execrations, and plying the tough *sjambok*, or large wagon-whip, with terrific effect, while the cracks resound like pistol shots among the hills; now twisting the tails of the unfortunate animals, now positively gnawing them with their teeth, to induce them to face their work, leaping on and off the *dissel boom*, or pole, with frantic energy, or stooping to set large *klips* (stones) behind the wheel, to prevent the wagon from slipping back; loud cries of "*juk*," to start the oxen, or "*Ah now!*" to stop them, or "*om*," to make them turn round, the last generally accompanied by a poke in the face with the but-end of the whip-stock. All this conveys but a faint idea of the reality. At length the lucky moment arrives; the leading oxen, which have been turned down the hill to give them a run, are started forwards, the whole span *trek* together, the ponderous wagon rolls after; and, amidst repeated cries and crackings of the whip, whose lash descends with frightful rapidity and precision on the offending carcass of any who show the slightest symptoms of hesitation, the summit is reached, and the difficulty, for this time at least, surmounted.

The ascent of this hill occupied us three good hours. To those who inhabit the country beyond, such loss of time is a great inconvenience, making a visit to the town quite a serious business; and as it is on the highway by which all the trade of the interior passes into Natal, there is the less excuse for its existence, especially as a road might be easily led round the valley beneath, so as to avoid the worst parts, if not the whole of the ascent.

From this point the view of Maritzburg is very pleasing. The elevated position of the beholder enables him to look right into the town, and the trees with which it is already ornamented, and which could not be seen from the other approach, now form an important addition to the picture and give it a fresh and green appearance which contrasts well with the bare hills around.

Here we outspanned and dined, while the oxen roamed at will over the Veld, and the horses enjoyed the same liberty except that they were knee-haltered. We made but a short evening's *trek*, and encamped for the night at Riet Spruit, (or Reedy Brook,) having accomplished little more than ten miles. This evening our fire was of *mest* or dry cow-dung, which burns to a white ash, gives a great heat, and is no bad substitute for wood. And here I may observe that as a general rule throughout the centre of Natal, wood is only found in deep kloofs or ravines, which are not always visible to the traveller, who may ride many a weary mile without seeing a single bush to enliven the monotony of the prospect.

October 2.—Less than an hour's *trek* brought us to the Umgeni. A few yards below the drift or crossing are the falls, which are said to be three hundred feet in height. The river was low, so that we missed the imposing effect of a large body of water; but the scene was grand notwithstanding. Bare rocks rise from the bottom like pillars, hemming in the gorge into which the stream rushes; further on steep banks, now also bare, but which in summer may be clothed with grass, form the walls of the ravine; while, far below, the river dwindled to a shallow brook, winds round an angle of the rock and disappears. It was a wild, savage, stern-looking spot, but not without beauty.

The Umgeni Falls are a favourite resort of the pleasure-seekers of Maritzburg, who disturb their solitudes with noisy pic-nic parties, and help to fill the pockets of Old Lodge, a quondam ship's purser, who keeps a small house of entertainment on the bank, and a punt for crossing the river in times of flood. For this last office he is paid by Government, whose servants he is bound to ferry over in case of need.

The Umgeni valley is one of the most fertile in the district, and a spot has been wisely selected as the site of a village on the further bank, where there is every facility for leading out the stream so as to convey a good supply of water—an advantage which an African river does not everywhere present.

We continued our route through a hilly country, and towards night arrived at the "Stink hout rand," a ridge, so called from the abundance of this useful wood with which it is clothed. Our road lay along the edge of the declivity, on what would in some parts of England be called a "hog's back." At the bottom is an extended plain of more than average fertility, where a few tents mark the out-lines of another settlement, called after its promoter Lidget Town, the success of which may be confidently predicted if only from the abundance of fine timber in its immediate vicinity.

In the course of this day's *trek* we met no less than ten or twelve wagons containing Dutch families on their way to Maritzburg for the half-yearly "Nacht maal" or sacrament. The Dutch are very punctual in their attendance on these occasions, and travel immense distances in order to be present. They generally make a week's stay, in which they transact all their business, and buy their stores for the next six months. Unfortunately Maritzburg gains little beyond a temporary increase of population, as we did not see a single wagon loaded with produce of any kind. The fine span of twelve or fourteen oxen which might with ease have carried down a couple of thousand pounds weight of grain, served only to draw the stout Boer, his *vrouw*, and their allotment of olive branches, to their destination.

October 3.—Left all signs of wood behind us, as we approached the valley of the Impafane River, the favourite country of the Dutch settlers, who have bestowed on the stream the name of "Mooi," or Beautiful.

It is shallower than some of its sister rivers, and therefore has more effect on the soil through which it flows, but the district to which it gives its name is one of the most deficient in the two essentials of wood and water, though considered equal, if not superior, to any for grazing purposes. Barkley and I had a delicious bathe in the refreshing stream, which, like all those of the inland part of Natal, is eminently pure and limpid. I improved my sleeping accommodation by the purchase of a grass-mat which a passing Kafir sold for the really moderate price of sixpence, but I was glad to spread my mattress under the shelter of the wagon, in spite of the danger incurred by such close proximity to the iron of the wheels in the event of a storm. I took the precaution, however, of letting the chains of the "*riem scoon,*" or drag, hang to the ground, to serve as conductors, and slept soundly as usual.

October 4.—A morning *trek* of five hours brought us to Bushman's

River, where we outspanned, and, as we intended resting a day or two, pitched our tent.

There is a small fort here, and a detachment of the 45th Regiment and of the Cape Mounted Rifles, who are placed as an outport against the Bushmen, a race of degenerate Hottentots, who inhabit the spur which at this point runs out from the Kathlamba Mountains, and are a great nuisance to the settlers,—stealing their cattle, horses, &c., and committing all kinds of depredations. They are troublesome and dangerous neighbours, being most expert in "driving" and using poisoned arrows. When followed, they retreat into inaccessible parts of the mountains, and if pushed hard, unless completely taken by surprise, cut the throats of the cattle, thus rendering pursuit useless, as well as hazardous. To induce the oxen to venture up these precipices, which it would be otherwise impossible to make them attempt, they have recourse to an ingenious stratagem. They smear the ground with fresh "mest," which the sagacious animals detecting, are deceived into the idea that the path has been trodden by others of their kind, and thus gain confidence to proceed.

The Cape corps are continually employed in the harassing duty of pursuing these marauders, and occasionally, after great fatigue and exertion, succeed in recapturing a few cattle, but beyond killing one or two stragglers, have never been able to inflict any signal punishment on the tribe, or to repress their lawless outbreaks.

There is but one remedy for this evil—the entire extermination of these Children of the Mist, whom it is impossible to reclaim, and difficult to hold in any check; and this would long ago have been effected by the colonists themselves had not the Government refused to lend its sanction to the enterprize. Meanwhile, no decisive steps have been taken towards ridding the country of the pest. It would really seem as if they were preserved like other noxious vermin, for the especial sport of her Majesty's troops, who ought to be grateful for so amiable a distinction. If this were the case, the sooner a general *battue* is ordered, and the head-quarters of the game beaten up, the better. But, joking apart, the truth is that the fault does not lie with the Government, but with those who, under the plea of humanity,

—and it is to be feared too often under that of Religion—have warped the public mind by misrepresentations, and excited it by clamorous appeals, thus creating a morbid sensibility and false feeling which has rendered the exercise of wholesome severity not only difficult, but almost impossible. These agitators either forget or voluntarily shut their eyes to the fact, that in many cases, clemency to the savage is positive injury to their fellow-countrymen; and that forbearance on our part is sure to be repaid by increased audacity on the part of the offenders, to the heavy cost of the farmer, who is thus left without protection or redress.

A similar case occurred some years ago in Australia, which was nearly terminating in the ruin of all the graziers along the border line of the interior; as the shepherds and stock-keepers refused to be responsible for their charge unless allowed to retaliate upon the blacks for the injuries which they inflicted, and for the occasional murder of some of their number.

The result was, that after repeated appeals to the authorities at Sydney, which met with no effectual response, the squatters *did* take the law into their own hands, and having surprised their savage foes on the top of a wooded hill, slew more than seventy of them, and thus put an end, for a time at least, to their marauding expeditions.

Such would have been the course pursued by our Dutch predecessors, from whom, spite of our superior intelligence, and the comparative darkness in which ignorance and prejudice have enveloped them, we have yet to learn some useful lessons in the management of native tribes.

Difficulties, it is true, might arise in the prosecution of an enterprize such as I have suggested, from the remarkable position of the stronghold of these Bushmen, which has I believe been scarcely ever visited by white men, but is supposed to be a deep circular basin in the heart of the Kathlamba, near the sources of the Tugela and Orange Rivers, accessible only at one point, and there by a narrow and precipitous defile, which a knowledge of the locality would enable its defenders to maintain against a greatly superior force; but to suppose that these obstacles, even if they have not been exaggerated, could not be overcome, or that a well-organized attack upon such a foe could fail of complete success, is an idea which no colonist would entertain for a moment.

Nor, even if unsuccessful, would it lead to any extension of hostilities, or tend to embroil us with other and more dangerous neighbours. The Bushmen are not, like the Kafirs, part of a great nation, between whose scattered tribes, however divided by internal feuds, there is on some points a community of feeling sufficient to unite and render them truly formidable; on the contrary, they are, even among their fellow-savages, a proscribed race—they dwell apart—"Their hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them;" and in compassing their destruction, though we might obtain little efficient assistance, yet we should carry with us the entire sympathies of our native population, as well as of the Kafirs beyond the Drakenberg, all of whom are their deadly enemies, and would rejoice at their downfall.

Our first object was a call on a neighbouring Boer, in whose care Darnell had left his oxen on his way towards Maritzburg, to recover from the fatigue of their long and toilsome journey, and to escape the risk which they would have incurred in the lower and less healthy districts of Natal. A quarter of an hour's walk up the bank of the river, along a winding path broken by deep gullies, and through a wilderness of mimosas, brought us to the farm, where we found the master, Martinus Oosthuizen, busily engaged in the slaughter of an ox. He proffered us his hand, which, though bearing evident tokens of his occupation, we knew better than to refuse, and invited us into his house. My stock of Dutch was at that time so limited that I was unable to join in the conversation which ensued between our host and Darnell, but I could understand that Oosthuizen assured him of the health and safety of the oxen, and of their good condition. While we were sitting there, the head of the prettiest horse I had yet seen in Africa appeared above the sill, or lower half of the door, and Lieutenant Mill of the Cape Corps announced himself. He had been stationed at the fort for some time, and, from the reception which he met from the old farmer, it was plain that he had had the good sense to cultivate his Dutch neighbours, and was a frequent and welcome visitor at their houses. Whether the bright eyes of the Dutch lasses had anything to do with the matter, I cannot say; but certain allusions to a dance, and some sly questions about "the other evening" were sufficient proof that these attractions were not wanting, and the following story, which gave us many a hearty laugh, shows that there is spirit as well as beauty to be found among the fair sex of this wild region. The event which it relates had just taken place, and had caused quite a sensation in that part of the country.

An English gentleman, whose duty called him to reside at Bushman's River, had beguiled the time which hung heavily upon his hands, by falling in love with the pretty daughter of one of his Boer neighbours; and though the young lady herself manifested no great ardour, she was at length induced by the pressing importunities of her admirer and his friends, to yield a reluctant consent to his proposals. Report says that these importunities partook of the nature of threats. However that may be, the happy lover made all preparations for the marriage: his house was enlarged, new furniture purchased, &c., and on the day appointed the clergyman arrived from Maritzburg, a distance of sixty-four miles, to perform the ceremony. There was no "kirk to deck at morning tide;" but, as in the old song, "The priest and bridegroom wait the bride" in vain. The damsel, repenting of her engagement as the hour of its fulfilment approached, had actually started off at midnight on a horse, which she borrowed from her brother-in-law, who was no other than our friend Martinus himself, and, accompanied by her younger brother, had taken a precipitate flight. She rode for eight hours without "off saddling," and never drew bridle rein till she was "o'er the border." Her first words when she arrived at her journey's end are worth recording, as they contain a whole chapter on the feeling which exists between the two nations. Leaping gaily out of her saddle, as if she had taken but a morning's ride, she cried, "*Ik heb den Engelschman verschalkt*"—"I've done the Englishman." There was some talk of a "Jock of Hazeldean" behind the scenes, but I believe that the rumour was a false one, and that the young lady is still unmarried.

As to the disappointed swain, when, after a persevering search, not by "bower and ha'," but in corn-lofts, and cow-houses, and all possible and impossible hiding-places, he was at length convinced that she was gone, his rage was extreme, and the whole Dutch nation was included in his vindictive anathemas. The Boers, meanwhile, smiled, and said, that Mr. —— was a *kwaad* (angry) man.

While on the subject of marriage I may remark that the colonial law of succession to property is one which is hardly suited to our English notions, and which, besides that it bears witness to a rare degree of petticoat supremacy, is really productive of many serious evils. On the death of her husband the widow becomes entitled to three-fourths of the property, the remaining fourth being divided among the children, who are thus left comparatively destitute, in the very probable event of their mothers contracting a second marriage.

This may of course be avoided by a previous deed of settlement, or, as it is here called, an ante-nuptial contract, but to such a proceeding the ladies naturally entertain a very decided repugnance; and once when I was rash enough to attempt its defence in their presence, a torrent of reproaches poured in upon me, and to fill up the measure of my confusion a haughty maiden with flashing eyes exclaimed, "Sir, were a man to make such a proposal to me, had he the wealth of a king and the virtues of a saint, I should give him his dismissal on the spot." I was silenced, as the reader may suppose, and was careful not to offend again in like manner during my residence in the country, and even here, though at a tolerably safe distance, I write these words with fear and trembling.

In a remote part of the world like that in which we now found ourselves, where one does not generally see the best possible specimens of one's own countrymen, it is always a pleasant thing to meet an educated Englishman, with whom one can converse on equal terms, and in this respect our chance encounter with Lieutenant Mill was particularly fortunate. His courtesy and kindness, and his agreeable company, made our sojourn at Bushman's River, which would otherwise have been merely a vexatious though necessary delay, one of the most pleasing episodes in our journey, and I the rather mention it because such conduct is by no means so universal as it should be among Englishmen in a wild country, and because the duty of hospitality though not positively neglected, is still not so much a matter of course in South Africa as to be passed without notice or acknowledgment. Mill's quarters consisted of one small room, with the usual flooring of clay and *mest*. Thick walls of *adobe*, however, rendered it delightfully cool, especially when contrasted with the burning heat of our tent, which was scarcely endurable. Here, while smoking our pipes after a substantial breakfast, we were entertained with one of the most amusing instances of rhodomontade that has ever come under my notice, even in a colony where drawing the long-bow is practised to perfection.

The unconscious exhibitor, whom I shall call Page, had, according to his own account, been an officer in the navy, and was in the receipt of an annual income of £500, the enjoyment of which he left to his wife and family in England, while he himself was content to occupy the humble position of tutor in a Boer's family, at the liberal salary of £40 a-year, which he indignantly informed us was about to be reduced to £20. Not content with this strong beginning, he launched into the private history of his family, which, if Mr. Burke has omitted in his "Landed Gentry," it is a *hiatus valdè deflendus* which should be filled up as soon as possible. His intimacy with all the great men of the day reminded us strongly of Pell and the Lord Chancellor, especially when he told us how the Duke of Wellington, dining on board the ship in which he was a midshipman, had patted him on the head, exclaiming, "Page, my boy, go on as you have begun, and you will be an honour to the navy." He concluded with the following graphic description of an interview with the Premier, which is really too good to be left out:—"Before leaving England," said he, "I called to take leave of my friend Lord John Russell, and found him at breakfast. On sending up my card, however, I was instantly admitted, and after a cordial greeting, 'Page,' said his lordship, 'have you breakfasted?' 'Yes, my lord.' 'Are you sure you've breakfasted, Page?' 'Yes, indeed, my lord.' 'Then sit down and make yourself comfortable while I eat my egg.' When the egg was finished his lordship turned round with a confidential air, and said, 'Now, Page, you're an old naval officer, give me your candid opinion on the repeal of the navigation laws!'"

I need scarcely say that a roar of laughter followed this anecdote, but without at all discomfiting the worthy "captain," who never appeared to dream of our doubting the authenticity of his narrative.

This species of bravado is, as I have before said, no uncommon thing in colonies, the impossibility of testing the accuracy of statements leaving a wide range open to the invention, and offering every encouragement to the aspirant after cheaply earned greatness. It may well be supposed that the industrious settler holds such characters in supreme contempt.

October 5.—An incident occurred this evening which gave us a more correct idea than we had hitherto entertained as to the real nature of the unreclaimed savage. Hearing that an ox was to be slaughtered for the use of the camp, Barkley and I, who had had a discussion on the respective merits of steel and lead for the purpose, were tempted to witness the operation. The butcher happening to be absent his duty devolved on his Kafir servants, who set about the work with far more than their usual alacrity, evidently considering it rather as an amusement than a task.

The herd being driven as near as possible to the place of slaughter, one of the Kafirs proceeded to capture the doomed one, by throwing over his wide spreading horns a noose fastened to a long pole, which he carried in his hand. The sagacious animal, however, as if suspecting the intention, pertinaciously declined the encounter, eluding every attempt by a rapid movement of the head, and at length, when hard pressed, breaking from the herd and scampering over the plain. His pursuers gave chase with yells of delight, and after he had tried every means of escape the poor creature was caught by one of his hind legs, and dragged backwards by main force to the fatal spot, where a gallows was erected, consisting of two poles and a cross beam, such as is to be seen on every African farm, serving the double purpose of a stake to which the living ox may be fastened previous to his execution, and the means of suspending the carcass above the reach of marauding wolves or jackals.

The beast's head once made fast to this post, or to a ring in the ground, the *coup de grace* is usually administered by dividing, with a sharp-pointed instrument, the first joint of the spine; when this is properly done death is instantaneous, and almost without pain. But so merciful a proceeding did not agree with the temper of these savage butchers, who would thereby have lost the best half of the entertainment, besides which they were by this time much too excited to give a steady, and therefore a final blow. Stab after stab was dealt with furious energy in any but the fatal part, and while the blood spouted on all sides, and the poor beast kicked and struggled, his delighted tormentors danced for very joy, laughing, tossing their arms about, and displaying the most intense gratification. I may as well close the scene which was eminently disgusting, but at which I could not help wishing that some of the "Aborigines Protection Society" had been present.

At least twice a-day during our stay on the banks of this beautiful stream, did we plunge into its waters, deriving fresh vigour and health from every immersion. A smooth ledge of rock, sheltered by the bank, which rose high above it, formed our dressing-room, from which we leaped into a depth of ten or twelve feet of water. These ledges, or *klip plaats* as the Dutch call them, are to be seen in all the Natal rivers, and not unfrequently in the smaller brooks or spruits. Where they cross the stream there is usually a slight fall or rapid, terminating in a deep pool, below which there is generally to be found a ford or drift. These pools, which I have often found, on diving to the bottom, paved with a flooring smooth and even as polished marble, were the favourite haunts of the hippopotamus, when that animal was more common within the colony, and before the *roer* of the Dutchman had startled their solitary retreats, and carried havoc among their herds. Underneath these ledges were their secret chambers, which the diver, to his great risk, discovers far beneath the surface. They are still called *zee koe gats* (Hippopotamus holes).

On the further bank was a solitary little cabin in which, however, the spirit of trade was actively at work, making for itself a fresh starting-place from which to spread over the whole of this now desolate region. Here as spruce a shopkeeper as ever stood behind a London counter, with a large-eyed, theatrical-looking wife, from the sweet shades of Norwood, and one or two thumping babies, had established himself, and, monopolizing the custom of the little garrison with that of chance travellers, was already doing a business which would be considered very decent in a country town in England. It sounded quaintly enough in such a place to hear the wife, with her *empressé* and rather affected manner, apologize for the dishabille of her husband who was plastering the wall of his tiny shop. Nor did it appear less strange when we inquired into the contents of the store, to hear of champagne, English preserves, and other superfluities, to which we had bidden a long adieu. We treated ourselves, however, to the luxury of a nice loaf made by the fair hands of Mrs. Flory herself, and sixteen fresh eggs, for which we paid a shilling.

October 8.—Struck tent and inspanned our oxen, which had been driven in the previous evening, and which, in spite of Oosthuizen's assurances, did not seem to have gained much by their stay on his farm. Indeed they presented a miserable appearance,—two only of the small though hardy Zulu breed, which thrive under all circumstances, looking fit for work. I have by me the names of the oxen, which, as a curiosity to English readers, I insert, with their respective places in the span :—

Colesberg.	Human.	Wildeman.	Plaatberg.	Vryman.	Sausman.
Leerman.	Botman.	Oortman.	Kleinveld.	Engeland.	Koopman.

The wheelers, or pole oxen, are called by the Dutch, whose phraseology is universally adopted in all matters regarding a wagon, *achter ossen.* The next pair *naast achter*, the next *op zes*, the next *op acht*, and so on till the foremost but one, which was called *naast voor*, and the leaders or *voor ossen.* Their terms for "near" and "off" are *hot* and *har*, so that in our span "Human" would be *hot op acht.* "Rhinveld," *har naast voor.* These two words, *har* and *hot*, to which the dictionary gave no clue, puzzled me not a little, and the only explanation I can offer is contained in the names of two towns on the opposite sides of the Seine, *Har*fleur and *Hon*fleur,—so I leave the matter to better linquists than myself.

Bidding adieu to Mill, whom a predatory incursion of his pleasant neighbours the Bushmen summoned in a different direction, we crossed Bushman's River, and its tributary the little one of the same name, and began the ascent of a steep hill on the other side. Here the weak state of our oxen began to tell, and after a similar scene to that which I have attempted to describe at the commencement of the chapter, we were obliged to outspan four of them, and drive them on by the side, contenting ourselves with a reduced team of eight. Towards evening, we entered upon a less hilly country dotted with thorns, and outspanned for the night at Blaauw Krans Spruit, the scene of one of the most frightful massacres on record, even among savages.

Four hundred Dutch familes, men, wives, and children, who, on their first entrance into Natal, were encamped with their 600 wagons, along the banks of this stream and its tributary, which now bears the ominous title of "Moord Spruit," were treacherously surprised by the Zulus, and, in spite of a gallant defence, were almost all barbarously murdered.

The details of the affair are too horrible to mention; but I have been informed by Paul Beste, now magistrate of Harrismith, that he himself superintended the burial of 250 corpses on one side of the Spruit, while at least an equal number were interred on the other. Darnell had seen and conversed with a woman, one of the few survivors of this tragedy, who bore fearful witness to its reality, having still the marks of seventeen distinct assegai stabs on her person. Her name is, I think, Ratz.

The unfortunate party was commanded at the time of the onslaught by Greyling and Gert Maritz, the latter of whom gave one-half of its name to Pieter Maritzburg. The chief commander, Pieter Retief, after whom the town is also called, had been invited by the wily Dingaan to a feast at his own "*Kraal*," and had gone there in unsuspecting confidence, with sixty of his party, hoping to conciliate the savage, and to secure his countrymen from future molestation.

The main body who were left with the wagons, being thus comparatively unprotected, fell an easy prey to the swarm of Zulus dispatched by Dingaan for their destruction; as for Retief and his band, I need hardly say that they never returned from the feast, where they were butchered like the poor ox, whose fate I have described, and with the same manifestations of delight and triumph.

October 9.—Darnell shot a large hawk, measuring more than three feet between the tips of the wings. These birds, and the white spotted crow, are continually hovering over the outspans, especially when food is preparing.

A short *trek* over a flat country brought us to the Tugela, the principal river of Natal, which is here more than a hundred yards wide. Crossing it, we outspanned for three or four hours, in order to give Mackenzie time to make a loaf. Evening *trek* through the most picturesque country we had yet seen. Our route led us for some distance along the banks of the Tugela, which was here very beautiful, in one spot especially, where the river was crossed by one of the rocky ledges I have mentioned, and expanded below into a pool of more than ordinary width, the banks of which were covered with really green grass, and on the further side ornamented with clumps of mimosas; the scene was charming, and almost realized the fallacious descriptions of park-like scenery, with which the guide-books abound. Leaving these beauties with reluctance, we now came upon a desert of stones, the whole surface of the country being literally covered by them. After toiling up one or two rocky hills, between which we caught a glimpse of the irregular outline of the great Drakenberg, we outspanned on a plain by a solitary *kameel doorn* tree, a lofty species of mimosa, so called from its leaves being the food of the stately giraffe.

This evening we saw seven rheeboks (*Redunca capreolus*) with a young lamb; and Darnell got a long shot which, however, was unsuccessful. This was the first appearance of game since we left Maritzburg.

The whole of this district, now so solitary, bears marks of having been once thickly inhabited. On every side, the ruins of old cattle kraals, round inclosures of loose stones, meet the eye; but not a single native is to be seen. They have all been driven out or exterminated by Chaka, that monster in human form, of whose atrocities Mr. Isaacs has given most frightful accounts in his interesting book on Natal.

October 10.—Through a flat country, sprinkled with thorns, to "Klip River," a narrow stream, with steep banks, where our poor oxen stuck again, and detained us a good hour. A new village has been founded on the banks of this stream, to which the ridiculous name of "Ladysmith" has been given as a pendant, I suppose, to that of Harrismith, on the other side of the mountain. We had intended visiting the place, and paying our respects to its able and efficient magistrate, Captain Strubin; but we missed the route, and found too late that we had passed it by. Our afternoon's *trek* was the most tedious we had yet made, and was rendered doubly unpleasant by a dry, searching wind, which blew right in our teeth. The aspect of the country now changed, presenting a vast plain, arid, burned, and stony, varied only by small round hills, or *kopjes*, which were scattered here and there on the otherwise level surface, and seemed rather to have dropped down from above, than to form integral parts of the scenery. The outline of the Drakenberg became hourly more distinct, standing high up against the sky, a fine background to a dreary and uninteresting picture.

Many a rare and beautiful flower bloomed in the bare soil, or lifted its head above the huge stones which encumbered the ground—flowers that would have delighted the eye of the horticulturist, and would have been valued treasures in an English conservatory. Many of them are yet unknown to science; at least they puzzled Darnell, who is an accomplished botanist; but for myself, I would rather have seen one bank of green turf and one spreading elm, than the rarest flower that ever bore the palm at Chiswick, or filled half a dozen pages of the "Gardener's Chronicle."

These plains, however, are not always so desolate: let one short month pass, and the wilderness of ashes shall be changed into a vast carpet of luxuriant green, which the enthusiastic traveller shall describe in glowing terms, stigmatizing this journal as false or prejudicial. But never mind! It is better to be agreeably disappointed than the reverse,—which was my lot.

The melancholy impression which the scene was in itself calculated to produce was increased by the aspect of the few farms over which we passed. They were for the most part entirely deserted, and fast relapsing into a state of nature. Where are the owners?—the sturdy Boers, who, as they fondly fancied, had bought this fair country to themselves for a perpetual inheritance? Over yon range of mountain, across the distant Vaal, far up towards the Limpopo, whose course is yet a problem to geography—they have fled from British government, from British interference. There the little republic stagnates in safe obscurity, and sends messages of innocent defiance across the border. And there let them remain, since they will have it so. We would be well content that they should stay among us, and become one with us, in the hope that prejudices and animosities might be rubbed off on both sides by close and continual intercourse. But we will not now disturb them in their banishment; our hands are full enough as it is. Let them not think, however, to hand down to their posterity even these remote solitudes,—for, as surely as the Orange River runs into the Atlantic Ocean, or the Nile into the Mediterranean, so surely will the energy and perseverance of the Anglo-Saxon, his powers, nay, even his very language, penetrate, subdue, and civilize the interior of this vast continent, from Abyssinia to the Cape, from the Channel of Mozambique to the Pillars of Hercules.

And yet it was a sad sight, this premature decay—this ruin without the softness of eld—this death before life had well struggled into existence; and it suggested a gloomy train of thought, which the reader will thank me for forbearing to inflict upon him.

Right glad were we all, when having, after a long search, discovered a small spruit, not quite dried up, the oxen were halted and outspanned for the night under the lea of one of the round *kopjes* which I have mentioned above.

October 11.—This morning our horses, which had been knee-haltered as usual, and turned out to graze the previous evening, were not to be found. We had nothing for it but to despatch the boys, Aaron and Kinett, on the *spoor*, and to await their return with what patience we might.

A Hottentot, I should observe, like a post-boy, is always a boy though he be tottering with age; whether he enjoys the same universally conceded privilege of immortality, I have not been able to ascertain. The Kafir war has ere now solved that problem. Would that itself might be solved as easily.

We passed the day as we could, gathering flowers which we were unable to name, cleaning and trying our guns, and sleeping,—the great resource in a hot climate. The weather, however, had become sensibly cooler as we approached the mountains. Towards evening, Aaron and Kinett came back with the horses, which they had tracked to our last outspan, whither they had returned for fresher pasture. Here they had found nothing but last year's grass, yellow and withered. Darnell also returned from an unsuccessful search for game; and Mackenzie, with better fortune, brought a sheep, which he had purchased at a neighbouring farm for four dollars (six shillings). The Boer had at first refused to sell it, but was overruled by his better half, who had, as she said, travelled across the desert herself, and having experienced the want of food, could feel for poor fellows in the same predicament. "*Haud ignara mali.*" Kind creature! How thankful we were; for we had actually no meat, and the mountain air sharpened our appetites.

October 12.—A short *trek* brought us again to Klip River, where, the ascent on the other side appearing very steep, and a storm coming on, we outspanned, and were glad to huddle up in the wagon for shelter, shivering with cold. But the rain soon ceasing, we resolved to attempt the drift, and endeavoured to make the bank less slippery by throwing over it some dry earth and ashes, the contents of a curious hole in the ground, that appeared to have done service for an oven. Notwithstanding our precautions, the oxen stuck, and the usual process was repeated. Darnell lighted his pipe, and walked straight a-head—his invariable habit on these occasions; Barkley busied himself energetically among the horns and tails of the unfortunate oxen; the Hottentots worked well, being in their element; Mackenzie appeared very active, but did nothing; and your humble servant fulfilled his allotted task of setting the stones under the wheels, at the imminent risk of crushing his fingers. At length the oxen chose to *trek* all at once (which, if they had chosen to do two hours before, they would have saved themselves and us a great deal of trouble), and drew the wagon out with the greatest ease. The fact is, that in these long spans half the strength is wasted, from the difficulty of making all the oxen draw together, which they are very rarely persuaded to do.

Thence over a gently undulating country, the *veld* improving as we proceeded, till we struck the Klip River again, and outspanned on its southern bank under a stony hill covered with the prickly aloe, whose dead leaves helped to make our fire. Here we bathed, dined, and stayed the rest of the day. We were now within a short *trek* of the Drakenberg, which on a nearer view rather disappointed our expectations both as to height and boldness of outline. Indeed it seemed little more than a very high range of grassy hill, broken at intervals by dark woody *kloofs*, but presenting no formidable barrier to our exit. We had approached the mountains at the point of their smallest and least abrupt elevation, leaving the loftier and more inaccessible portion of the range far away to the south and west. That the reader may the better understand our position, and the general nature of these mountains, I will here quote the words of Dr. Stanger, Surveyor-General of Natal, which will convey a more correct idea than any description that I can offer. I extract them from Mr. Christopher's work on Natal.

" The Draakberg, instead of being considered as one continuous chain of mountains, may be more correctly divided into two, of different geological structures, and having different directions; the one forming the north-western boundary I shall call the Small Draakberg, and the other, forming the western boundary the Great Draakberg. The north-western portion of the Draakberg is of the average altitude of five thousand feet above the level of the sea, and about fifteen hundred feet above the general level of the country at its base.

The outline is in general round and soft, presenting some remarkable features, and occasionally high table-lands with precipitous sides. These mountains are composed of beds of sandstone cut through by veins of trap, and diminish in height as they advance to the north-east, until at some distance beyond the source of the Umzimyati they appear to terminate in low hills. They are passable almost at any part by horses and cattle, but there are only three passes in use by the Boers: one near Bezuidenhout's farm, in lat. 28° 33′ south, and long. 28° 44′ east, and one at De Beer's, in lat. 28° 26′ south, and long. 28° 52′ east; and another a little to the south-west of Bezuidenhout's. The two former are in constant use, the latter rarely."

[It was by this latter pass, which to any but an African wagoner would appear impracticable, that the Boers made their first entrance into Natal. I have never seen it; but my companions, who descended the mountain by that route, describe it as almost precipitous, and consisting in some parts of shelves of rock, down which the wagon drops three or four feet at a jump. They accomplished the descent in safety, but, while outspanned at the foot of the mountains, saw a Dutch wagon, whose driver was either less skilful or less fortunate, roll from the top to the bottom. One can imagine the result.]

" The Great Draakberg, or that portion of it which forms the western boundary, has a direction N.N.W. and S.S.E. The junction of this with the former, or Small Draakberg, is ten or twelve miles to the south-west of Bezuidenhout's pass; from this point rises the Tugela. These mountains are much higher than the others, and are quite impassable, presenting a rugged outline and bold precipitous escarpments.

" From a distant view, from the nature of the outline (not having been near them) I infer that they are granite."

I should add that the native name " Kathlamba," though common to the whole range, is more especially applied to this last division, which Dr. Stanger has called the Great Draakberg.

The reader will at once perceive that it was the Lesser Draakberg which we were now approaching; in fact we were in the neighbourhood of De Beer's pass, though we contemplated making the ascent by another road, a little to the north-east of De Beer's, and known by the name of the "Quagga Pad," from being the usual track of these animals in their annual migrations between the Sovereignty and the higher parts of Natal. This is considered the easiest pass for a loaded wagon, and is therefore in most frequent use.

Easy as it might be, it was pretty clear that it would prove too much for our reduced span of eight oxen in their present feeble and emaciated condition, and a committee of ways and means was accordingly held, in which it was determined that Darnell should set off the following morning for the new town of Harrismith, which lay about twenty miles beyond the Drakenberg, at the foot of the Plaatberg, a very remarkable table-mountain, whose summit was even now visible in the clear horizon. This was to be our first halt, if not the end of our journey, my friends having partly made up their minds to the purchase of a farm in its neighbourhood, and here Darnell expected to find two oxen, which he had left in the care of a farmer on his downward route, and to be able to hire others if necessary to help us over the pass.

October 13.—At daybreak Darnell started, mounted on "Schutkraal," an old bay horse, which, as his name infers, had been purchased out of the Pound for sixty-four rix-dollars, and which, being a hardy animal, had suffered less than the others from change and deficiency of pasture, or from the long drag behind the wagon. Barkley and I made a short *trek* to the foot of the Drakenberg, crossing the Klip River on our way, for the third time, with the usual incidents, our best ox, Koopman, narrowly escaping from strangling himself in the yoke.

The scenery became more and more varied and picturesque as we advanced (when is not mountain scenery beautiful?), and our outspan was a delicious spot.

A mountain stream of crystal purity ran babbling through the windings of a narrow valley, now hidden among tall reeds, now running evenly between soft grassy banks, anon rushing swiftly over smooth beds of rock, whose every vein might be traced through the medium of its glassy waters, or diving into a miniature ravine between steep overhanging cliffs, whose sides were clothed with shrubs and creeping plants, and here and there with trees of fantastic growth, which cast a dark shadow on the little pool that slept beneath, unvisited by the fierce rays of the noonday sun, ever fresh and cool and unruffled save by a leaf dropping from above, or the light dance of a buzzing insect on its surface. A steep hill-side, which we had just descended, sprinkled with thorns and evergreen shrubs, walled in the valley to the east, terminating just where the stream made an abrupt angle, and was lost to view in a deep *kloof*, whose recesses the eye sought in vain to penetrate; while to the west the ground sloped gently upward, and then broke into knolls and *hoeks*, or corners and ridges and hollows, and more *kloofs* and more ravines just as the roots of the Drakenberg might chance, as they struck into the soil of Natal, to spread, or swell, or twist, or bury themselves beneath or above its surface. The earth was covered with rich verdure, and for the colouring of the picture, in the exquisite varieties of light and shade, a painter alone could do it justice.

Here we spent a day of quiet enjoyment (for it was Sunday, and we had arrived before noon) wandering along the course of our little stream, and filling our senses with beauty till our conversation took quite a poetical turn. Do not be alarmed, gentle reader! I am not going to conclude this day's journal with "Lines on the Drakenberg."

We started several ourebis, and I do not say that we might not have been tempted, spite of poetry and sentiment, to fire at them, but our dogs started them out of shot, and we were spared the alternative. Voltein and Kafirland, however, had no hesitation on the matter, and continued the chase long after it was hopeless,—which indeed it was from the first,—the ourebi being the swiftest of the antelope species, and few dogs a match for him,

October 14.—Breakfast was just over, and we were smoking our matutinal pipes in the shadow of the wagon, when we were aroused by Aaron's cry of "*Keek! daar de Baas*,"* and, looking up, saw Darnell slowly descending the hill on foot, driving Schutkraal before him,

* See, there is the master.

whose drooping head, and tottering pace, plainly showed that he was thoroughly knocked up. Nor did our friend appear in much better plight. Wet, weary, and haggard, and, if the truth must be told, not in the best of humours:

> " In other guise than forth he yode
> Returned Lord Marmion."

He said little till he had finished a cup of strong coffee, and had made considerable inroads into Mackenzie's last loaf (capital bread the fellow made by the by), then, being in some measure refreshed, he gave us the following history of his adventures:—

" I ascended the pass, in which there is only one awkward bit for a wagon, and followed the track that appeared to lead towards the Plaatberg; but as there were several roads branching off in different directions, I did not feel quite sure, and chancing to meet a Boer with his wagon, I asked him the way. The rascal must have misled me on purpose. I thought I saw a grin on his countenance as he was speaking. I rode on for at least twenty miles, till the old horse showed evident symptoms of fatigue; whereupon I off-saddled, and leaving him to graze in a green hollow, walked five or six miles farther, but though I gained the top of a hill which commanded an extensive view, I could see nothing like *dorp*, or farm, or human habitation of any kind. I had nothing for it now but to return to the spot where I had left the horse, and, having mounted, I set off at a good pace, hoping to reach the wagon before night. At first he appeared refreshed, and went pretty well, but he soon began to flag again, and when within about ten miles of the top of the mountain came to a dead stand-still. I plied whip and spur as long as they produced any effect (here Darnell showed his Molucca hunting crop, which was shivered into fibres), and then looked out for a sleeping-place. I chose a dry flat rock in the bed of a shrunken stream, tolerably sheltered by the banks, but I need not tell you, quite sufficiently exposed for the climate, which is several degrees colder than below the mountain, and not particularly suited to an asthmatic constitution. There was a small drizzling rain, too, throughout the night, which did not improve my position. From every quarter came the howl of the jackal and hyena—a pleasant lullaby—and once or twice I thought I heard the distant roar of a lion, which effectually counteracted any disposition to sleep. It was just in that neighbourhood that Lacey the 'Smous' had a fine horse killed by the side of his wagon, and I confess the thought made me feel rather uncomfortable. Schutkraal, I think, must have shared my apprehensions, for when I rose from my hard couch in the grey of the morning, and tried to approach him, he thought it better to decline the interview, evidently regarding me with an eye of suspicion. Knee-haltered as he was, it took me more than two hours to catch him, and when caught, I found him so little recovered from yesterday's fatigue, that I was obliged to walk almost the whole distance, driving him before me as you saw. I was lucky enough, however, to meet a man at the top of the mountain, from whom I ascertained that there is a Dutch farmer within two miles of this place, who has oxen for sale or hire. So let Mackenzie go at once and see about it; he can buy a sheep at the same time. As for me, I shall turn into the wagon and take a snooze."

And I think, dear reader, that if you had ridden forty miles and walked twenty, passed a wet night on a stone, knocked up your horse, lost your way, missed the object of your journey, and fasted for thirty hours, you would have been right glad to follow his example.

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CHAPTER VII.

A MISTY MORNING—THE DUTCH BOER—ASCENT OF THE DRAKENBERG—HALF-WAY UP—THE "SMOUS"—THE CURTAIN DRAWN—A SQUINT PATH—A FULL SPAN—VIEW FROM THE SUMMIT—ANT HEAP—JACK AND THE BEAN-STALK —THE SOVEREIGNTY—GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISION—NATURAL DIVISION—VLAKTEN—DUTCH HUNTING—HIGHLANDS—HOW TO SETTLE A COUNTRY—LAND SALE—NELSON'S KOP—OSTRICH HUNT—PLAATBERG BY MOONLIGHT —WHERE'S THE WAGON?—HARRISMITH—PINCH AND NECO—THE MARQUEE—OUR HOST—KAFIR TRADE—A HOT WALK—CONEYS—MISSING OXEN —AN ADVENTURE—THREE SHOTS—TAKE THAT—SEARCH FOR A FARM—HORS-DE-COMBAT — TOPOGRAPHY — OXEN FOUND—PARTING—A BIT OF SENTIMENT.

October 15.—Mackenzie's embassy proved highly successful. At daybreak I was awoke by a peculiar shout, which I at once recognized as that of a Kafir herdsman, and, creeping out from under the wagon, saw a troop of huge shadowy creatures advancing through the mist, followed by what appeared a weird giant of unmeasured height, and undistinguished form.

As they drew nearer, they subsided into a span of fourteen beautiful little Zulu oxen, of uniform size, shape, and colour, and a tall native, wrapt in a cow-hide, and carrying the carcass of an animal, by courtesy called a sheep, though the piebald thing had a very goat-like appearance, which its taste, if I remember right, did not fail to justify. The Kafir announced the speedy arrival of his "Baas," and we had scarcely finished a hasty breakfast, when the old Boer made his appearance, mounted on a strong good-looking chestnut, and leading a stout bay. He was clad in a narrow striped jacket, such as footmen in England occasionally wear, and trousers of black corduroy; his hat was tied up in a many-coloured handkerchief, and at his side hung a huge powder-horn.

His moustache and whiskers were united, and both were snow-white, and his countenance was more expressive and less stolid than that of most of his countrymen, while his frame was that of a tall powerful man.

Hans de Lange, for such was his name, was altogether a very fine-looking old fellow, and did not belie the character which he bears of a brave man, and a keen sportsman, and especially of a daring and successful lion-hunter.

Dismounting, he shook hands with us severally, bid us a gruff but hearty "*goeden dag*," and gave the order to inspan. The first part of the ascent was very gradual, so that notwithstanding the slippery state of the ground (for a drizzling rain was falling), we proceeded steadily onward, almost imperceptibly rising, till many of the *kloofs*, whose summits, as we gazed upwards from below, had been lost in the morning mist, yawned at our feet as we passed along their upper edge, like the mouths of huge caldrons, seething with dense clouds of vapour. Here and there we came upon knolls covered with the evergreen *Suiker bos* a graceful shrub, which imparted a lawn-like cultivated appearance to the spot on which it grew, and added softness to a scene which, though wild, exhibited none of the stern features of a more rocky and precipitous range. In little more than an hour we had reached a bit of table land, about half way up the mountain, and here, as the worst part of the ascent was yet to come, and it was not judged safe to proceed in the present state of the ground, we were reluctantly compelled to outspan.

Even in this solitary spot we were not alone. A wagon, which had passed us the previous evening, stood on one side of the road, its long *treck touw* hanging idly on the ground, while a thick smoke that struggled up through the fine rain, and a savoury odour that greeted our nostrils, were unmistakeable signs of that cooking animal, man.

We soon recognized Mr. Murphy, one of those enterprizing traders, or, as they are colonially termed, *smousen*, who journey through the deserts of the interior supplying the wants which have arisen with the growth of civilization among the remote Boers and natives, and who are, to the scattered population of their thinly-inhabited districts, what the itinerant pedlars once were to the secluded villages of England—retailers of damaged stuffs and old news, of tinsel jewellery and idle gossip. Like the pedlars also, if report speaks truly, they have no objection, when they meet with a safe customer, to deal in contraband goods, and many a musket, and many a pound of powder that are now doing terrible execution upon our brave soldiers, may have been supplied by their agency.

They seldom deal for money. The Boer is naturally a hoarder of gold, and is very loth to open the chest, or disturb the buried stocking; and, as for the savage, his wealth does not consist in stamped coin. But their wagons return to the great towns loaded with bags of *mealies* (Indian corn), or with a far more precious cargo of ivory and skins, while herds of cattle and horses, the produce of many a clever bargain, follow in their train. There are few people for whom a roving occupation like this, once experienced, does not possess a peculiar fascination; nor is the African *smous* an exception to the rule,—hardship, privation, and danger threaten him in vain. His wagon may break down in the bare desert, where not a stick can be found to repair the damage; his cattle may sicken and die, his oxen fail in mid-journey; the lion may carry off his best horses, whose price had already been fixed, and for whom a sure purchaser was in prospect; he may suffer hunger and thirst, and the extremes of heat and cold; none of these things are sufficient to disenchant him, or to inspire him with a wish for a more settled and less adventurous existence; the town soon wearies him, and, after snatching a short, though often a riotous season of enjoyment, as men are wont to do when intervals of holiday are brief and far between—the sailor on shore, the Australian settler on his annual visit to Sidney with his yield of wool, the Canadian lumberer when "stream driving" is over, and the logs of a winter's chopping delivered to a merchant—like these, he returns with fresh zest to his darling occupation; his wagon is reloaded with goods, his oxen inspanned, and he is off again to the wilderness, prepared, if need be, to encounter the same, or even greater hardships than before, and confident, in the end, of reaping a golden harvest.

Nor are such anticipations likely to be disappointed. Secure from competition, and subject to no law, but that of the seller's own conscience,—not a very favourable one for the buyer,—the trade cannot be otherwise than lucrative. The outlay, moreover, is small in proportion to the profits, which are enormous; the risk is trifling, and the return immediate. Of course, in these bargains, there is plenty of room for the exercise of that species of commercial shrewdness which is apt to stretch the bounds of honesty to their farthest extent; and when Greek meets Greek, the game is fair enough; but it is obvious that in nine cases out of ten, the Dutch, or native purchaser, can have as little chance in a bargain with the *smous,* as a novice on the turf in the hands of a professed *leg.*

Still, these men are far from being useless in their generation: they are the links between the busy ports and the far interior; they bring into notice many valuable productions which would, but for them, remain unknown to the commercial or the scientific world; they open up the buried resources of their unvisited regions; they are the pioneers of civilization; and, if they do now and then take advantage of their unsophisticated customers, when have white men, in their intercourse with their fellows of a darker hue, failed to do the like? Is not the whole history of our commerce with the American Indians full of such instances? Who does not remember the story of the fraud practised on the Blackfeet Indians, which changed their friendship into deadly enmity? How the American free-traders gave, in exchange for piles of beaver and buffalo skins, a few grains of powder, telling these credulous natives that the seed would produce an abundant crop—and how the Indians, the next season, retaliated the abominable trick, promising that the skins should be forthcoming when the seed appeared above the ground? No such enormity has ever been laid to the charge of the African trader, and if we are inclined to be over scrupulous, we must be silenced by the old proverb, "*Non est inquirendum unde venit venison.*" While the reader, therefore, cuts the leaves of this book with his ivory paper-knife, let him thank Messrs. Murphy and Co., for the luxury, and not be too curious about the price of the tusk from which it was made.

But where is Mr. Murphy all this time? I have been very negligent, and owe him, and Mrs. Murphy also, for he travelled *en* *famille*, a thousand apologies for so long delaying their introduction. Nor ought I to forget the contents of the large iron pot, nor the cup of hot coffee with which we were kindly entertained. He was a warm-hearted Irishman, and I think coffee could hardly have been his favourite beverage. Indeed, I have no doubt that he owed his reception among the Boers to the case of brandewyn in his wagon, as much as to the fact of his having married one of their countrywomen, which would alone have been sufficient to establish his claim of relationship in almost all their houses.

Not even Mr. Murphy's society, however, was sufficient to make that home in the mountains an agreeable one. Shivering with cold, (for cold, after all, is only a relative feeling, and does not depend on the state of the thermometer), drenched with rain, and vexed at the inopportune delay, we were as thoroughly miserable as such a combination of circumstances could make us. Suddenly, Hans de Lange, who had been watching the vapoury heavens for some time with an eye alive to the slightest indication of a change, called our attention, and, pointing in a southerly direction, showed a bright patch of landscape which was disclosed through a small rent in the thick curtain that surrounded us, and seemed to be basking in the rays of a noonday sun. "It is just twelve o'clock," said Hans, "and we shall have a fine day after all." Scarcely had he uttered these words of hope, when the bright spot vanished as in a dissolving view, and the curtain of mist closed again thicker and more damp and chilly than before. Still Hans persisted in his augury; and now again it is lifted in the form of an arch, and underneath appears the top of a low hill, whether far or near we know not, but very clear as if seen through a telescope; and now the arch widens and fresh rents are visible, and the edges of the curtain contract and melt like the breath on a pane of glass, and now it hangs in tattered shreds, that curl upwards swiftly but imperceptibly: and now it is gone, and the deep blue sky is over head, and the genial sun blazes forth from above,

> "And the moist earth is laughing below."

The magical change which I have here attempted to describe, is so vividly painted by Scott in the "Bridal of Triermain," that though the lines may be familiar to many of my readers, I cannot resist the temptation of inserting them :—

"A summer mist arose;
Adown the vale its vapours float,
And cloudy undulations moat
That tufted mound of mystic note,
As round its base they close.
And higher now the fleecy tide
Ascends its stern and shaggy side,
Until the airy billows hide
The rock's majestic isle;
It seemed a veil of filmy lawn,
By some fantastic fairy drawn,
Around enchanted pile.
The breeze came softly down the brook,
And sighing as it blew,
The veil of silver mist it shook,
And to De Vaux's eager look
Renewed that wond'rous view.
For though the loit'ring vapour braved
The gentle breeze, yet oft it waved
Its mantle's dewy fold;
And still, when shook that filmy screen,
Were towers and bastions dimly seen,
And Gothic battlements between,
Their gloomy length unrolled."

But there is no time for delay. The ground is drying fast; and there will be good foothold on the pass by the time the oxen are inspanned.

Murphy is of the same opinion, and is already driving up his span, from whose reeking hides a cloud of steam is exhaled. But he has no ambition to take the lead; not from any excessive timidity, but that he may have the advantage of our track for guidance, or warning, as the case may be.

Let us walk on, and reconnoitre. The wagon can follow at leisure. For some distance, the road winds gently upward with an easy ascent; and look! there is the last pitch straight before us—rather steep, but nothing for our fourteen fat little Zulus: the pass is no such great affair after all. "*Vacht een beetje.*" (wait a bit), said Hans, "there is a hollow between us and that pitch which will give us some trouble yet." As he spoke, we gained the top of the brow which had interrupted our view.

The road ran round a projecting swell of ground, which, descending almost abruptly, left no level space for the wheels, and made what the Dutch call a "*scuinsch pad*," and a very squint path it was certainly. The rain had settled in the lower rut, softening the earth, which, forced up by former wheels, had afforded a slight protection on that side, and the chance of a slip was thus increased. The consequences of such a slip may be imagined when I add that scarcely ten feet below this sidelong track was the edge of a large *kloof* which appeared to have been scooped by some gigantic hand out of the mountain sides, within whose depths, now no longer lost in mist, we could see, far beneath us, the tops of tall trees, whose roots were fixed but half way down its precipitous sides. Still overhanging this abyss, the track then dipped into a hollow trough, which might have been the channel of the summer floods in their passage to the plains below; beyond this rose the last steep pitch, which it required nothing but a long and strong pull to surmount.

Indeed, the slanting bit which I have described hardly amounted to what Aaron would call a "*leelyke plek*" (an ugly spot), nor would any further precaution than careful handling of the oxen have been necessary, but for the slippery state of the ground, which called for more than the ordinary expedients. The one to which we had recourse is very effective, though it may appear ludicrous to the English dragsman.

Taking three or four *riems* of stout buffalo hide, of which there should always be an ample stock at hand, we made them fast by one end to the outer part of the wagon, on the higher or up-hill side, and hanging on to the other ends with all the force and weight we could muster, endeavoured to counteract the downward inclination of the vehicle, and preserve its equilibrium,

When we had all a firm hold, the oxen were started, and by dint of pulling, scrambling, slipping, and shouting, passed the point of danger triumphantly, and reached the bottom of the last steep ascent. Whether our safe passage was entirely owing to our exertions, I hardly know; for my own part, though I pulled vigorously, I cannot flatter myself that I was of much service, for the sloping ground giving me no *point d'appui*,—each pull threw me fairly on my back, to the no small amusement of our two Hottentots, who laughed uproariously.

Having got over the difficulty ourselves, we ran back to assist Murphy, who had not followed our track so exactly but that his lower wheel had slipped off the road, and a capsize was inevitable, when, just as our united efforts were failing, a lucky bolt of the oxen, which appeared to threaten certain destruction, extricated him from all danger. The oxen, I suppose, content with this involuntary feat, refused to face the last ascent, and it was not till twelve of our span were yoked in front of his own, making a span of four and twenty, that his wagon was drawn up, and stood beside ours on the summit of the Drakenberg. A moment's breathing,—for it has been sharp work,—and then we turn to look at the view, which is well worth all the trouble we have had to reach it.

Beneath us lay discovered in their deep recesses many a wooded *kloof*, rich in the variety of foliage, shrubs, and flowers, and ornamented here and there with fine timber trees. A rich carpet of verdure clothed the side and foot of the berg, as well as its summit, while beyond, and far as the eye could reach, the Natal country lay stretched out before us like a map, the fresh green gradually fading into yellow and brown, as it receded from the mountain, and the round *kopjes* that dotted the surface, looking like overgrown ant-heaps, bare, treeless, and desolate.

I have forgotten to mention that real ant-heaps form a considerable feature in South African scenery. For miles and miles they are the only objects that meet the weary traveller's eye, mayhap recalling to him, by the regularity in which they occur, and by their resemblance in size and shape, the manure heaps that are lying ready to be spread over the cultivated fields of his deserted English farm, which, in spite of taxes, landlords, and hard times, he already begins to look back upon with fond regret. They are of a light grey colour, are baked hard by the sun, and are said to make tolerable bricks.

Connected with them, also, is a far less pleasant association. In the annals of savage history, fit only to be written in letters of blood, we find them used as an instrument of perhaps the most infernal torture that the ingenuity of man, "*Suadente diabolo,*" has ever invented. The wretched victim, whether prisoner of war or offending subject, having been smeared with some oily substance, was partially interred in one of these heaps, when, if not previously roasted by the burning sun, he was literally devoured alive by the myriads of insects which have their habitation there! I have heard it asserted that some of our own countrymen have met this dreadful fate; but I would fain believe this to be without foundation.

And now having climbed the mountain, the reader will doubtless be preparing himself for its descent on the other side. What, then, will be his surprise when he learns that there is no such thing; but that the summit, like the top of Jack's celebrated bean-stalk, is the level of a vast tract of country occupying an area of about 50,000 square miles. We are now in the Vaal River district, the most northerly division of the Orange River Sovereignty.

As this extensive territory is beginning to attract public notice, and is, I fear, likely still further to engross it, from the spread of disaffection among the coloured inhabitants, it may not be amiss to give a brief account of its history, natural capabilities, and geographical position.

The Sovereignty is bounded on the south by the Orange River, the great artery of South Africa, which separates it from the Cape Colony Proper, or, as it is generally called, the Old Colony. To the north, it is bounded by the "Likwa," or Vaal River, which at present constitutes the well-defined limits of the southern line of the self-constituted Dutch Republic, to which I have, in a former chapter, made casual allusion. To the west, the boundary is formed by the confluence of this stream with the Orange River. Both these rivers take their rise in different parts of the Kathlamba or Drakenberg mountains, whose continuous ranges, known by different local names, form a natural barrier to the eastward, utterly impassable for a great portion of its length, and effectually dividing the Sovereignty from the Zulu country, Natal, and the line of sea-bord which stretches southward to Kafirland.

It is divided into four districts: that of Bloem Fontein to the south and south-west, in which is the town, of the same name, the capital of the country and seat of Government; that of Caledon, whose principal town is Smithfield; that of Winberg, in the centre, with a village of the same name; and the "Vaal River District," to the north and north-east, in which the principal, and indeed the only, town is the newly-founded *dorp* of Harrismith, situated in lat. S. 28°, 15′, long. E. 28°, 42′.

With regard to its natural characteristics, it admits of a threefold division. The Highlands adjoining the mountain ranges, the great plains of the interior, and the patches of soil, more or less productive, that are found along the course of the principal streams.

These last are of too rare occurrence to deserve much notice. They may include many degrees of fertility, the highest scarcely reaching an average standard of excellence, and far inferior to the soil of Natal, in corresponding situations.

The plains, or *vlakten*, occupy more than two-thirds of the whole extent of the Sovereignty, and may be said to constitute the general character of the country.

They are vast flats, dry, barren, and desolate, entirely bare of wood, even of the stunted bush, which is sometimes dignified by the name, and almost equally destitute of water. For all agricultural or pastoral purposes they are utterly valueless; but the amount of animal life which they support would appear fabulous were not the fact attested by so many credible witnesses, that all doubts on the subject have long merged into wonder and admiration.

Here are the chief haunts of those countless herds with which the whole interior of Africa appears literally to swarm, and which afford such rapturous delight to an enthusiastic sportsman. The grotesque gnu, the graceful quagga, the light and elegant spring-bok, the swift blesbok, may be seen here in thousands, aye, and tens of thousands, spread over the plain, or marching in almost endless line across its surface; while on their tracks, with sure but stealthy tread, follow the lion, the prowling hyena, and that sleek, well-fed villain, the jackal, the dread of the African sheep-farmers. Nor are these their only, enemies—hunger and cold destroy many; and after a severe winter, or a season of unusual drought, the bones of those that have perished are often found in immense numbers bleaching on the dry soil, and too truly attesting, what its inhabitants are very loth to confess, that the climate of their beloved Sovereignty is not always so genial as they would fain have us believe. The Dutch Boer, also, to whom the chase is not merely an amusement, but a serious business, having no less an object than to supply the necessary food for himself and his family, contributes largely to the work of destruction. His plan is, when his stock of provisions becomes low, to inspan his wagon, and travel a day or two's journey into the *vlakten*, till he has reached the head-quarters of the game, when his party (for he is generally accompanied by two or three neighbours) encamp near some well known pool or ready watercourse, and, leaving their native servants in charge of wagons and oxen, give themselves wholly to the work of slaughter. Armed with their long *roers*, well mounted, and thoroughly conversant with the habits of the various animals, acting, too, in perfect concert under the guidance of an experienced leader, following a regular system of tactics, and hampered by no sportsmanlike scruples as to the means by which their object may be attained, they rarely fail of success, and a few day's exertion is sufficient to furnish a supply of meat for many weeks to come. The flesh is immediately cut up into long strips, slightly salted, and then strung upon the side of the wagon to dry. When thus prepared, it is called *beltong*, and requires no further cooking. It is rather hard, but by no means unpalatable; indeed, even the flesh of the quagga, which, though highly esteemed by the Kafirs, is of so rank a nature that its very smell is insupportable, becomes, in this state, a pleasant and wholesome article of food for Christian men.

The traveller occasionally meets with native *kraals* in his passage over these sea-like wastes, but with the exception of a chance wagon on the route between Natal and the Cape colony, no other signs of human life are to be seen.

I cannot better conclude this brief sketch of the *vlakten* than by the following beautiful description of the western prairies of America, by Longfellow, which, though far too highly coloured for a South

African landscape, is still sufficiently near in resemblance to convey a general idea of the peculiar character of scenery common to both countries. The points of difference will suggest themselves to the reader at once:—

> "Spreading between these streams are the wondrous, beautiful prairies,
> Billowy bays of grass ever rolling in shadow and sunshine,
> Bright with luxuriant clusters of roses and purple amorphas,
> Over them wander the buffalo herds, and the elk, and the roebuck,
> Over them wander the wolves, and herds of riderless horses;
> Fires that blast and blight, and winds that are weary with travel,
> Over them wander the scattered tribes of Ishmael's children,
> Staining the desert with blood; and above their terrible war trails
> Circles and sails aloft, on pinions majestic, the vulture,
> Like the implacable soul of a chieftain slaughtered in battle,
> By invisible stairs ascending and scaling the heavens.
> Here and there rise smokes from the camps of these savage marauders,
> Here and there rise groves from the margins of swift-running rivers,
> And the grim taciturn bear, the anchorite monk of the desert,
> Climbs down their dark ravines to dig for roots by the brook side,
> And over all is the sky—the clear and crystalline Heaven,
> Like the protecting hand of God inverted above them."

The third natural division, that of the Highlands, extends along the eastern line of the Sovereignty, broken by the various spurs of the Kathlamba, such as "the Wittebergen," the "Rood rand," &c., and to the north-east, running parallel with the main range of the Drakenberg as far as the sources of the Vaal. It is chiefly confined to the Vaal River district, of which it occupies a considerable portion.

Owing to its great elevation, and the consequent decrease of temperature, this division does not appear to have attracted the attention of the Boers in their migration from the old colony, and but few of them settled upon it; it has lately, however, begun to rise in general estimation, and is now acknowledged to possess greater advantages than any other part of the Sovereignty, especially for the purposes of pasture. The grass, while it wants the luxuriance of the rich valleys of Natal, is exempt also from the sour taste which renders them unfit to support sheep, and though short and tufty like all mountain herbage, is remarkably sweet and wholesome; and, which is of still more importance, is little affected by the droughts which prevail to so destructive an extent in the lower districts of Winberg and Bloem Fontein. Water is tolerably abundant, both in springs and rivers and there is plenty of light bush for fuel. Horses and cattle thrive there, and it is thought that the fine-woolled sheep may be reared with great success. Already more than one enterprizing farmer from the old colony has announced his intention of testing the capabilities of this hitherto neglected district, and the sale of land has proceeded rapidly.

Here was an excellent opening for a well-digested plan of emigration. Twenty or thirty families of that useful class who combine labour and a small capital, would, if placed on these farms, not only have secured an independence for themselves, but have developed, by slow, yet sure degrees, all the resources of the country, and have formed the nucleus of a resident British population permanently attached to the soil, and likely, in course of time, to spread over the habitable parts of the district, and to form the surest defence of the colonial frontier against native disturbances or Dutch aggression.

The only objection to such a scheme would consist in the inability of these emigrants to pay an adequate sum for the lands allotted to them, and this, from the necessary size of a pastoral farm, which ranges between 3000 and 6000 acres, might at first appear insuperable; meanwhile, let us see whether, under another system, the land is likely to be more profitably or advantageously disposed of.

The attention of Government was first drawn to this part of our dominions in the year 1848, when the rebellion, which immediately followed the proclamation of British authority between the Vaal and Orange Rivers, had been brought to a close by the defeat of Pratorius and the insurgent Boers, at Boem Plaats, in the August of that year. Tranquillity being thus restored, active measures were taken for the establishment of order, and for securing the undisturbed occupation of the country. A fort was erected at Bloem Fontein, and a garrison placed there for its protection. Fines were levied upon the Boers who had been implicated in the late outbreak, in proportion to the extent of their criminality, the estates of those who refused to pay the demand were confiscated, and the land-surveys, which had been interrupted, were resumed.

In the course of these arrangements it was found necessary to separate the Vaal River district from that of Winberg, of which it had hitherto formed a part; and a site was accordingly selected for a new *dorp*, to which the name of Harrismith was given in commemoration of his Excellency's visit to the place on the occasion of his journey to Natal some months before, and over which Paul Beste, one of the insurgents who had shown the first example of submission, and had sincerely returned to his allegiance, was appointed magistrate.

The report of the new district was most favourable. In addition to the advantages which I have already enumerated, its proximity to Natal, and its central position, lying, as it does, on the only route between the interior and the nearest or eastern sea-port, were calculated to enhance its value, and to give it a commercial importance beyond that which it could have claimed from its mere capability of production.

It naturally became the object of Government to encourage the establishment of settlers in this promising region, and a commission was appointed to survey and mark out urban and suburban lots, and to define the limits of future farms or those already existing, with authority to make grants of lands to those who should apply for them at a quit-rent of from £2 to £8 per annum for each farm. It may be supposed that there was no lack of candidates on these terms, and an upset price, which was soon added to the quit-rent, hardly served to check the eagerness of the competition. This did not suit the views of the land speculators, who had already fixed their eyes on the opening prospect of gain, and every possible device was employed to keep purchasers out of the market, and to hinder the further increase of the price. The old trick was resorted to, of crying down the goods they were anxious to buy, and reports were industriously circulated to the disadvantage of the new settlement, which were so far successful as to cause an immediate falling off in the number of applications, and to divide at least, if not to turn, the tide of public opinion.

Taking advantage of this temporary depression, and of the alarm of the authorities lest their nursling should perish in the birth, they contrived, by using their influence at head-quarters, that the best farms should be put up to immediate auction, and a sale was actually held at Bloem Fontein, ostensibly public, but virtually, from the want of due notice and other causes, as close and private as they could desire, at which fifty of the best farms in the immediate vicinity of the new town were sold for £20 a piece.

Thus more than 30,000 acres of Crown land passed into the hands of men whose only object was to sell at a profit, and who would in all probability never bring a single rood into cultivation. Many of them were already the owners of immense farms, or rather territories in different parts of the colony, which they held on a similar speculation.

No sooner was the result of the sale known than it became evident that under fairer circumstances the land would have found purchasers at a much higher rate; and an upset price of £50 was forthwith set upon the remaining farms, which besides being at a greater distance from the *dorp* were in all other respects, such as quality of soil and supply of wood and water, far inferior to those already disposed of.

On my visit to the place more than a year after these events I found that of all the farms purchased at the sale above mentioned two only might by courtesy be said to be occupied, and on neither of them was there any habitation more substantial than a tent, or any signs of cultivation beyond a strip of unfenced garden. They were both for sale, and from £300 to £500 was asked for each, while the lowest sum for which one of the most distant and least eligible of the granted farms could be bought was £150.

If the reader bears in mind that the word farm signifies nothing more than a given quantity of wilderness, he will be at some loss to account for this increase in value, and will doubtless agree with me that the man to whom the task of reclaiming it may fall will hardly need the intervention of a middle-man to increase his difficulties at starting, or to absorb beforehand whatever profit may result from his long continued toil and perseverance.

It is much easier at all times to find faults than to suggest remedies, and I am well aware that every endeavour has been made by the insertion of occupation clauses, &c., to ensure to the actual cultivator the benefit of the Government grants and sales; but one cannot doubt that it is by such transactions as these that the true end of emigration is frustrated; opportunities of good are lost, and the poor man is made to feel that the hope of independence for which he left his cottage home to seek a distant colony is still as far from his grasp as ever.

But it is high time to return to the *trek*, which this tedious digression has sufficiently interrupted. Hans de Lange has long left us, and is by this time half way to the Plaatberg, sitting upright on his chestnut, and followed at a respectful distance by his Kafir, who, bestriding his second horse, and carrying his master's large unwieldy *roer*, in a cover of leopard skin, over his shoulder, looks the "tiger" to perfection, and would make a fine caricature of a sporting groom for some would-be African Nimrod.

We continued our route over a green undulating country, congratulating ourselves on having arrived at the end of all our difficulties, but we were soon undeceived, on reaching the bottom of a hill whose whole side, road included, was covered with huge loose stones. We found this ascent far worse than the Quagga Pass, which is all soft grass, and our gallant little span stuck on it so long that we began to despair of surmounting it. By dint of *voorslag*, or whip-lash, however, we at length overcame all obstacles, and gladly outspanned in the vale below after a short but fatiguing day's journey. (Loose stones make the worst of all roads for oxen, cutting their feet, and giving them no sure foot-hold.) We were obliged as before to double Murphy's span by the addition of our own, in order to enable him to get over the hill.

High as we are there is a higher still. We passed this morning under a mountain whose summit is garlanded with a ring of perpendicular rock, appropriately termed *krans*. We crossed a nice stream, which we afterwards discovered to be the Wilge, or Willow River, a tributary of the Vaal, which here turns inland, after a course of fifty miles along the summit of the Drakenberg. Our way now led over a series of wide-spread undulations, the *veldt* becoming drier and drier till not a blade of grass was to be seen. Murphy, whose wagon followed close upon ours, pointed out to us a wilderness farm of 6000 acres, one of the outlying Harrismith estates of which I have given the history, which he was good enough to offer us for £150. A more barren-looking piece of ground I have seldom seen. A high hill lying to our right attracted our attention from the remarkable shape of a rock which projected from its summit, and which, from its fancied resemblance to a human head, is known by the name of Nelson's Kop. We were pleased to imagine that some sturdy old tar, whose destiny had wafted him to these shores, instead of consigning him to pensioned rest at Greenwich, might have paid this tribute to the king of sailors, but our flight of fancy was soon checked by the information that the Nelson in question was some great merchant in the old colony, probably a sugar vendor in Graham's Town, or some such place. A worthy man no doubt, but we never dreamed of a classical association with anything African from that time forward.

Game now began to be more plentiful than we had yet seen it, though the vast herds of which I have spoken had already begun their annual migration to the interior. In the winter want of pasture drives them from their favourite *vlakten* into these mountain districts, which, except in unusually arid seasons like the present, are never entirely dried up, but as soon as the summer rains set in they return to the plains. We saw a herd of spring-boks (*gazella euchose*) at a distance, and a couple of blaauw wildebeests, or brindled gnus (*catoblepas gorgon*) stared at us from an opposite hill, but they were too wild for us to approach them easily, and we had not time to stalk them.

We now came to a spot where two roads branched off, and, being uncertain which to take, chose that to the left, which turned out to be anything but the right. After a morning's *trek* of four hours and a half we outspanned near a *spruit*, or rather a succession of deep pools without any visible communication between them. In one of them Barkley and I bathed, and found the water intensely cold (though in a burning sun) and of great depth. We could neither of us reach the bottom, though tolerably expert divers.

These holes are probably connected by subterranean passages, which are by no means uncommon in African waters. A heavy thunder-storm detained us here beyond the usual period of the midday rest, and we were still further delayed by our hired oxen, which, as soon as they found themselves at liberty, had started off homewards, and were not easily recaptured.

We inspanned again at half-past three, and soon reached the bottom of the Plaatberg, but saw nothing of *dorp* or farm. Barkley made a desperate attempt to get a shot at a couple of ostriches which ventured within a few hundred yards of the wagon, but the dogs spoiled sport as usual. These birds are very common throughout the Sovereignty, and their feathers, so precious in England, have been long the usual ornament for the straw hat of the colonist; indeed they are beginning to be voted vulgar by the *élite*, and have descended to the Hottentots, who, unlike the Kafir, is fond of imitating the white man in his dress, of which he often presents an exaggerated picture.

The speed of the ostrich is proverbial, and it is considered a great feat to ride one down. A Boer once gave me the following account of a chase of this kind, for the truth of which, however, I do not pretend to be answerable. Having determined to lose no chance of effecting his object he lay in wait near the spot where the bird was accustomed to drink, which they do but once a-day, and then in such quantities as materially to affect their speed, or at all events their power of endurance in a long run.

As soon as the ostrich had drunk his fill the Boer gave chase, mounted on his best steed. He had previously observed the course which the bird usually took on leaving the water, and had sent on two horses to act as relays in case of necessity. Nor was the precaution superfluous, for it was not till the third horse was ridden to a stand-still that he was able to come alongside of the object of his pursuit, and to give the halloo of victory. His triumph was dearly bought, for of the three horses he had ridden two lay dead upon the plain, and the third never completely recovered the effects of this terrible burst. Swift as he is, however, the employment of a simple stratagem renders the ostrich an easy victim to his pursuers. A stern chase is always a long chase, and, well aware of this truth, the hunters, three or four in number, separate themselves, and try to head and surround the bird, till, harassed and beset on all sides, it loses the power to escape, and, standing helpless and motionless, suffers itself to be captured without a struggle.

The country now began to assume a bleak and desolate appearance, and the climate became very perceptibly colder. We rounded three sides of the Plaatberg, crossed the rocky bed of a river, and proceeded along a straight and apparently endless track by the light of a bright cold moon. Heartily tired of the slow monotonous tread of the oxen, and anxious to discover, if possible, some more terrestrial gleam which might direct us to the much desired *dorp*, Darnell and I walked on a-head, for some distance, till, chancing to turn our eyes backward, we perceived that the wagon had disappeared, nor, though we listened attentively, could we catch the dull sound of the wheels, or the encouraging or admonitory shouts of Aaron. We immediately turned back, thinking that some accident must have occurred, but we retraced our steps for more than a mile without meeting any sign of wagon or comrade; all had vanished from the plain which lay around us still and lonely, like the calm surface of the ocean, while the shadowy side of the Plaatberg loomed like the shore of some rocky island on our lee. We began to think that we were on enchanted ground, the victims of some mysterious or magical agency, and to fear that we might be doomed to make the perpetual tour of this mountain in fruitless search of Harrismith.

"Italiam sequimur fugientem."

We shouted to break the spell, but not so much as an echo replied, and we were just making up our minds to the positive evils of a supperless night in the *veldt*, quite sufficient without the addition of supernatural terrors, when, as I was incredulously following Darnell who had started off in pursuit of some light which he fancied he saw in the distance, I stumbled all at once upon the fresh tracks of our wheels, where they had left the road and turned off to the right. The reader can imagine our delight. As for me, I shouted "Eureka" at the top of my voice, and dashed off like a hound on a fresh scent. We had not followed the track far before we heard the crack of the whip, and soon after the report of a gun which Barkley had fired to direct us. Dipping into a little valley which had before escaped our notice, and crossing, for the third time to-day, the Wilge River, we found the wagon halting where two roads branched off, and hastened to outspan, after a fatiguing *trek* of five hours from our last halting-place.

October 17.—It had rained hard all night, and on creeping out from my damp bed under the wagon at early dawn, I felt little disposed for a renewal of yesterday's wanderings. What was my joy therefore, when, on casting my eyes towards the foot of the mountain, I saw, within a few hundred yards of us, the long-sought town of Harrismith! It needed a little African experience to recognize it as such, but I was getting accustomed to their vocabulary, and was well aware that one stone building, one Hartebeest-house, (a lean-to of reeds set against a frame of poles), a sod wall, and a water-course, were quite enough to constitute a *dorp*, and I hastened to communicate the welcome discovery to my companions.

Breakfast over, we walked to the town, which is prettily situated, well supplied with water, and not quite so badly off for wood as we should have expected; old Plaatberg disclosing on a nearer view many a depth in his rugged side, thickly set with stunted bush, which will be quite sufficient to keep the kitchen fires of Harrismith blazing for some years to come, even should it increase as rapidly as its most interested admirers foretell.

It is destined, say they, to be the centre of a large circle of flourishing corn and sheep farms, to be the granary of Natal, and the capital of a populous and cultivated district. At this time it consisted of the two buildings I have mentioned above, and one more in process of erection belonging to our friend Hans de Lange.

Paul Beste, the magistrate, and proprietor of *the* stone house, had not yet arrived to take up his residence; and the only inhabitants of the town were a couple of ruffianly-looking Englishmen, whose familar address we had some difficulty in cutting short with a freezing reception, and a wild Irishman who was more amusing and less offensive. On inquiry for Mr. Moffat, the gentleman with whom Darnell had left his oxen, we were informed that his farm was on the other side of the mountain, and that we must have passed close by it the day before. We had, in fact, made an unnecessary circuit of not less than fifteen miles, and had yet to double a fourth corner of the Plaatberg, before we could arrive at our destination.

Accordingly, about 2 p.m., we inspanned, having with difficulty obtained some beef from a Dutch farmer in the neighbourhood, of which we stood in great need. Our track lay through what is called a *poort*, or narrow neck between two mountains, still keeping Plaatberg close on our right.

Hunger made this afternoon's *trek* a short one, and we outspanned in one of those wild passes where, after some trouble in finding *mest* and lighting our fire, we sat down to a supper of boiled rice and beef and cakes done on the gridiron, with an appetite which a day's fast, and the keen mountain air, rendered positively ravenous.

Our adventures for this day were not closed with our supper: at midnight, I was awakened by the furious barking of the dogs who were evidently venting their rage against some beast whom they dared not attack more closely. It was quite dark, so that we could not see the object of their alarm, but a low smothered roar gave us a pretty clear notion on the subject. Pinch behaved valiantly, and we could hear his deep growl far up the mountain where the enemy, probably in ignorance of the force and number of his foes, had retired, but the other dogs contented themselves with swelling the chorus at a respectful distance, and as for Neco, the handsomest and best bred of them all, he showed himself an arrant coward, not only being the first to run away, but dashing in under the wagon and trying to sneak in beneath my pillow for protection,—a retreat from which he was summarily ejected.

October 18.—Heavy mist in the morning, which cleared as we ascended from the hollow in which we had passed the night. We had been directed to look out for a white *krans* in the mountain, as marking the site of Mr. Moffat's residence, and following this guide, in less than two hours we came in sight of a tent which for the present constituted the homestead or *erf* of the farm.

It was pitched in a pretty little hollow, formed by two spurs from the side of the Plaatberg, and terminating in a large reedy *vley* which opened up from the valley of the Wilge River. A babbling *spruit* ran along the bottom, whose further bank rose high and steep from the water, and was thickly overgrown for a considerable part of its length with underwood, such as thorns, acacias, and a small tree which, from its withered appearance, is called *oud hout*, and is useful for staves of small casks, buckets, &c. On the hither side the ground sloped gradually upwards, presenting a fair surface for cultivation. The peculiar shape of the hill had enabled its owner to irrigate it with great facility, and of this favourable circumstance he had taken the fullest advantage, having led the water from the head of the *spruit* to the very summit of the *bult*, to the extreme astonishment of the Boers, who were quite at a loss to account for the apparent phenomenon.

Mr. Moffat was not only a clever enterprising man, but a practical engineer, having held the office of surveyor to the Northern Sovereignty, which he had lately resigned for the more congenial occupation of farming. He is the son of the well-known missionary of Kuruman, whose hospitality many an English traveller, whether in pursuit of sport or scientific research, has gratefully acknowledged, and with whose interesting account of his labours among the native tribes of the interior most of my readers are doubtless familiar.

The host was absent when we arrived, but we were welcomed as expected guests by his servants. In the tent, or rather marquee, for it was double, containing an inner sleeping room, we found not only shelter from the hot sun, but a large collection of books, upon which we fell with an avidity such as none but a traveller in the wilderness can comprehend, and feasted for the rest of the day in a happy state of lazy abandonment. In the evening Mr. Moffatt returned with his wagon, and gave us a hearty reception. He had been on a trading expedition among the Kafirs, and brought back some sheep and goats, for each of which he had given an iron pick, such as the natives use in preparing the ground for their crops of maize and millet or Kafir corn, and which cost him 2s. 6d. a piece. A *muid*[*] of either of these grains might be purchased at the same price, while at Maritzburg Indian corn was now selling at from 25s. to 30s. per *muid.*

Beads have been much used in traffic with the natives; they should be white, blue, or red, and bright transparent ones are most prized; but the Kafirs are beginning to prefer the useful to the ornamental, so that rings and other tinsel finery, no longer find a market among them. The stock most advantageously exchanged is salt, a *muid* of which will purchase a wagon of Kafir corn and *mealies.* Some idea may be thus formed of the profits of this trade, which, however, are fast decreasing as the visits of the white man become more frequent, and the Kafir, who has a natural turn for commerce, begins to find out the real value of his merchandize.

October 19.—We went up the valley in search of game, the wild pig especially, several of them having been lately seen in the neighbourhood. We had a broiling walk, without any success to compensate for the fatigue. We flushed one bird of the partridge tribe, at which it was useless to fire, as our guns chanced to be loaded with ball. We got a snap shot or two at a curious little animal with a pointed nose, called by the Boers *das*, and supposed to be the coney of scripture. They certainly have their habitation among stony rocks, for in the place where we found them the little stream was walled in by craggy and almost precipitous banks rising high above our heads, and scarcely leaving a passage for our feet by the water side, while masses of stone were thrown about upon the face of the cliffs, and others had fallen into the bed of the stream, damming up the current, and forming rude bridges and miniature falls in its otherwise placid course.

Emerging from this defile into the broad *vley*, we toiled through a forest of reeds that reached above our heads, where I momentarily expected some wild beast or still more dangerous reptile to spring up in my path; we started nothing however but a solitary *riet-bok*, which escaped unmolested.

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[*] A *muid* is 2972-1000ths of an imperial bushel, and weighs about 196 lbs.

The boys returned to-day from a fruitless search after Mr. Moffat's herd of oxen, twenty-two in number, including two which Darnell had left in his care. They had been missing for some days, and though the boys had struck the *spoor*, it had been lost again in the hard ground. Three contingencies are to be apprehended for the herd, —they may be hunted by lions, stolen by Makatee Kafirs, or driven off by Bushmen. In the first one, the fattest only will have suffered, the lion being a delicate feeder, and an excellent judge of condition; in the second, they may be recovered by the aid of legal intimidation; in the third, they are irreparably lost.

October 20.—Our five dogs had not tasted food for a week, and were so famished that it was absolutely necessary to procure something for them, and Barkley accordingly set off early this morning, determined to kill a quagga for the poor animals. About mid-day, he returned, looking, as we thought, a little paler than usual, at which, on hearing his adventures, we were no longer surprised.

He had fallen in with a herd of quaggas, and was in full pursuit of them, when, crossing a valley, he observed four large animals at some distance drinking at a pool. Judging them from their size to be elands (*Bosclaphus oreas*), the largest and most esteemed of the antelope tribe, he immediately abandoned the vile game, and galloped towards them, upon which they retreated slowly up the *bult*, three in advance, and the fourth, which he judged to be the male, bringing up the rear. Barkley had already marked this one for his own, and was now within two hundred yards of his stern, when the flying party turned slowly round, and to his surprise and consternation, he discovered he had been chasing a lion and three lionesses!

Virgil tells us of a youthful hero who, while enjoying the puny sport of stag-hunting, longed to see a tawny lion approach; but even Ascanius might have been taken aback had he found himself unexpectedly brought face to face with four; and it was no disparagement to my friend's courage to say that he felt, as he candidly confessed, anything but comfortable. He was armed only with a single-barrelled rifle, and his horse, old Schutkraal, was in no plight for a race with the king of beasts, which can outstrip the swiftest antelope.

In this emergency, however, his presence of mind did not forsake him, and knowing that to show any symptom of fear, would increase the danger of his position, he pulled short up, and sat motionless, with his eye fixed upon his formidable adversaries.

The three females dropped quietly upon their haunches, gravely returning stare for stare; while the old "*mannetje*," as the Dutch familiarly call him, a splendid fellow, with a long black mane, and his sides literally shaking with fat, stood a little in front, ever and anon whisking his tail over his back, but made no movement in advance. Barkley, on his part, had no idea of commencing hostilities, and when this mute interview had lasted some minutes, he turned his horse's head round, and rode slowly away. No motion was made in pursuit, and as long as the spot was in sight, he could distinguish the four figures, to all appearance remaining precisely in the same position in which he had left them. In his way back, he found the carcass of a quagga, not a quarter of a mile from our tent, recently killed, and bearing evident marks of his late acquaintance's workmanship. We sent the boys for it; the ribs had been picked clean, but the hindquarters gave the poor dogs two or three hearty meals.

We congratulated our friend on his escape, which was the more remarkable, as during this month and the next, these animals are especially savage and unapproachable. Lions are indeed something more than mere bugbears in this country. Some time before our arrival, Hans de Lange had a valuable horse destroyed by them in the very market-place of Harrismith. His native servant, on rising one morning, to set about his daily labours, was suddenly heard to exclaim—"*Daar leg een zwart ding!*"* and immediately afterwards—"*Keek! daar loop een geel ding! het lyk net zoo als een leeuw.*"† And a lion it was, who, after deliberately contemplating the "black thing," no other than the carcass of De Lange's favourite black horse, turned round, and trotted away, as if indifferent about pursuit. Hans, however, did not take the matter quite so coolly; but, burning with rage at his loss, and at the impudence of the old *skelm*, as he called him, seized his trusty *roer*, and throwing himself upon the first horse he could find, without waiting for assistance, started off at a speed that soon brought him on the heels of the lion, who, finding himself pressed, bounded up a small *zant*, and having thus secured a vantage ground, faced his pursuer, and stood at bay. A large dog that was rash enough to venture within his reach he caught up, and, with one light stroke of his paw, swept him under his chest, when the flowing mane completely hid it from sight. Meanwhile Hans had dismounted, and now taking a steady aim, lodged a bullet just behind the shoulder. The lion neither fell nor moved till a second bullet from the same barrel had struck him, and in the same fatal spot. He then sprang forward. One bound would have ended the old Dutchman's history; but another of his faithful dogs throws himself in the way, only to share the instantaneous fate of his comrade. The delay is but for a moment; but Hans, whose self-possession has never failed him, takes advantage of it to reload, and, quick as lightning, the heavy *roer* is at his shoulder, the unerring ball finds its mark, and the noble beast sinks slowly down, and expires without a struggle. The skin was given to Barkley, who has brought it with him to England; the three holes are so close that they may be easily covered at once with three fingers. The old Boer thinks little of the exploit, but still grieves over his horse, whose bones he pointed out to us, bleaching in the spot where the catastrophe occurred, with the characteristic observation, "*Daar leg dertig ponden*," (There lie £30!)

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* There lies a black thing. † Look, there goes a yellow thing. It is very like a lion.

Mr. Kostern, another Dutch farmer, lately settled at Harrismith, had one horse killed, and another wounded by a lion, not six weeks before Barkley's adventure, and it is remarkable that in neither of the cases which I have mentioned was the carcass devoured, or even mutilated, with the exception of the neck-bone, which is invariably broken.

Some idea may be formed of these animals in the Sovereignty from the fact that an officer of the 45th "bagged" no less than seventeen in the course of the last year, by his own rifle, in the neighbourhood of Bloem Fontein, and that, in this district alone, from seventy-five to a hundred are annually killed by the Boers.

I cannot help adding one more anecdote, as it was told me by an eye-witness, on whose authority I can depend. He was travelling beyond the Vaal River, when a lion, alarmed by the approaching wagons, made off from the side of the road, and in his haste to escape, disturbed a hen ostrich sitting! The enraged bird, starting from her nest, rushed after the intruder, and dealt him a furious kick with its long and powerful leg, which so disconcerted the king of beasts, that he never once turned, but fled in headlong terror.

I have before observed that the chief object of my two friends in visiting this district was the purchase of a farm. Had their intention been carried out, it is probable that the author of these sketches would have been now deep in the mysteries of sheep-shearing and bullock-driving, and that his hand would be wielding the wagon whip or the plough handle, instead of the pen. I trust the reader will not be of opinion that his time might have thus been more usefully employed. But after spending some days in riding about the country, under the excellent guidance of Mr. Moffat, with the view of selecting a suitable spot for commencing operations, Darnell was obliged to confess that the search had ended in disappointment. One lot was without wood; upon another we could find no trace of water; a third was almost inaccessible from the broken nature of the ground, and there were none that appeared capable of repaying the comparatively large outlay necessary to the establishment of a farm of mixed agricultural and pastural character, even on a very moderate scale.*

The project of settling in the Vaal River district was accordingly

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* For the benefit of those who may desire more particular information, I subjoin a rough estimate of the outlay necessary for thoroughly stocking a farm, combining the breeding of sheep, horses, and cattle, which was drawn up by an especial hand. The cattle alone are indispensable, and, of course, the scale might be reduced to suit the means of the beginner:—

Farm, 600 acres,	£100	0	0
Ten milch cows, £2 10s.,	25	0	0
Fifteen heifers, £1 10s.,	22	10	0
One bull,	7	10	0
Two riding horses, £12,	24	0	0
One stallion,	50	0	0
Five Mares, £5,	25	0	0
Fifty ewes, 7s. 6d.,	18	15	0
Two rams, £3,	6	0	0
Fifty wethers, 6s.,	15	0	0
Four slaughter oxen, £2 10s.,	10	0	0
Carry forward,	303	15	0
Brought forward,	£303	15	0
One span steady oxen, five years old, at £3,	36	0	0
One young do., three years old, at £2 10s.,	30	0	0
Bullock wagon complete,	85	0	0
Plough, do.,	10	0	0
Six spades, 6s.,	1	16	
Three picks,	1	0	0
Money in reserve for sundries,	100	0	0
Total,	£567	11	0

abandoned, and as my friends had no further object for remaining in these parts, they determined to return to the frontiers of the Cape colony; Darnell, who suffered much from asthma, having found the warm but moist climate of Natal less suited to his complaint than a sharper and more bracing atmosphere. I should have liked much to have continued a journey which had been, in spite of all petty discomforts, most delightful; nor was it without great reluctance that I could resolve on bidding adieu to my kind and agreeable fellow-travellers,—but there was no help for it.

The D'Urban plague still clung to me, and my health was altogether so much impaired as to render me quite unfit for a long and toilsome journey, the end of which was uncertain, as might also prove the opportunity of returning; more especially as the rainy season was now fast setting in, and my bed beneath the wagon was likely to prove anything but a dry one. Add to this that the route would lie through, perhaps, the least interesting part of South Africa, where there would be little to gain, either in the way of amusement or useful information.

Upon these considerations, I resolved to remain behind, and accepted Mr. Moffat's hearty invitation to take up my quarters with him, until an opportunity should offer of a conveyance to Maritzburg. And here I cannot help adding my sincere acknowledgments of that gentleman's kindness and hospitality. He not only insisted on giving up his only bed to me as an invalid, and made every possible arrangement for my comfort, but was withal a pleasant companion, and so well-informed on all subjects connected with his native Africa, of which he was enthusiastically fond, that, though suffering from pain and illness, I really enjoyed my sojourn, and was able to add considerably to my stock of colonial knowledge.

Mr. Moffat is peculiarly interested in topography, and has taken advantage of the opportunities which his professional employment offered of collecting data to correct the gross inaccuracies which characterize all the hitherto published maps of South Africa, especially of the Northern Sovereignty, the country on both sides of the Drakenberg, and the Trans-Vaal territory, of which little is yet known.

Two of the most important problems still to be solved are the course and embouchure of the Limpopo River. The unhealthy nature of the climate along the eastern coast, which is almost equally fatal to men, horses, and cattle, renders anything like a survey of this part of the country impracticable; and it is only by a careful cross-questioning of an occasional Boer, or adventurous trader, that any information on these points can be obtained, nor when obtained is it easily reduced to any tangible form. All this, to Mr. Moffat, is a labour replete with interest, and I believe that his researches will have greatly assisted in the construction of a very perfect and accurate map of the colony, which was in contemplation by the authorities, and which will be a great addition to geography; I am also indebted to him for the rough sketch of the Vaal River district, which forms the frontispiece.

Meanwhile, day after day, continued but unavailing search was made for the missing oxen. Whether the Hottentots were really as diligent in the quest as they professed to be, it is difficult to say; but, as they always carried a gun, and on one occasion returned with the ear of a "wildebeeste," the carcass of which poor Schutkraal had to bring home the next day, it is probable that they spent their time rather more to their own satisfaction than that of their masters, and made holiday to their hearts' content. As it often happens, however, we had no sooner ceased all efforts for the recovery of the herd, than tidings reached us that they had been seen quietly grazing under Nelson's Kop, their number not only undiminished, but increased, by the addition of a calf born during their wanderings, which, with its mother, was reported to be doing well.

And now the day arrived (the 23rd of October) which my friends had fixed for their departure. Through the intervention of our host, Darnell had been able to effect a *ruiling* or "swap" of his poor and weary oxen for a fresh span, which, though not equal to ours in beauty of form and colour, were in better condition for a long *trek* through a dry and pastureless country.

The Dutch are as particular with regard to the uniform size and colour of their span as a coachman would be about his blood team, and as eight of ours were a perfect match, being *roode witte rug*, or red, with a white streak on the back, a colour much esteemed, they were readily taken in exchange, the more so, as not being required for immediate use, the fresh pasturage of Harrismith would soon restore them to health and condition.

With the same hope, I became the possessor of old Schutkraal, at a price which I must refrain from mentioning, lest the intending emigrant should deceive himself with the idea of making equally cheap bargains, and lay his disappointment on my shoulders.

One should be in the wilderness to feel, in its whole force, the pain of separation, even from a casual acquaintance. In the bustle of the world new faces succeed those which have passed by,—new friends replace the old; the mind is so occupied with the cares of business or the eager pursuit of pleasure, the eye with the ever recurring changes of external objects, that no one image can dwell long on the glass, no one thought occupy all our attention. But he who watches the retreating form of a friend along the dreary track of the desert, and then turns to the monotonous and lonely scene around,—doubly monotonous and doubly lonely then,—and thinks how it was just now enlivened by friendly faces and friendly talk, perhaps seen and heard for the last time, has no such care-dispelling remedy at hand: he knows not the "sweet sorrow" of parting, when "good night" bids look forward to "good morrow," but the desolate sensation of complete and utter solitude, the void which there is nothing present to refill, the shadows which memory conjures up, and which Time alone can render less distinct, but which not even his touch can efface.

But I am growing sentimental; it is high time to close this chapter.

I accompanied my friends some distance on their road, till the approach of evening warned me to return. My horse, which was tied in his usual place behind the wagon, is saddled, a brief parting, a warm shake of the hand, the hearty "good-by," the promise of correspondence, and, best of all, of returning to Natal in a few months, the loud crack of the wagon-whip, then a waving of caps, and Schutkraal's head is turned towards Plaatberg, which, though distant a good three hours' ride, seems as close as he did this morning, but more stern, and gloomy, and forbidding, than ever.

CHAPTER VIII.

PLAATBERG FARM—HOUSE-BUILDING—A WRETCHED SPECIMEN—THUNDER-STORM—SLEEPY WORK—HIRED KAFIRS—SIX TRIBES—TARRY FINGERS—EQUIPPED FOR THE CHASE—A LONG WAY ASTERN—THE SCHIMMEL HUNTER—LYING IN AMBUSH—THE FATHER OF THE HERD—SCHUTKRAAL AND THE QUAGGAS—THE CAPTIVE—RESISTANCE—NURSING—NATURAL HISTORY—THE FATE OF A PET—A NEW ARRIVAL—PATRIARCHAL JOURNEY—DROUGHT—LADIES IN THE VELDT—A RACE WITH A STORM—THE THIEF INTERCEPTED—NIGHT PROWLERS—THE STEL—THE MISHAP—VANGEE AVENGED—MISNOMERS—ANGLING—THE HARRISMITH PACK—FARMING IN THE SOVEREIGNTY—WANT OF NEATNESS—PROSPECTS OF HARRISMITH—RETURN TO NATAL—A CHANCE MEETING—UP-HILL WORK—"SHE MILKED THE DUN COW"—WHO ARE YOU?

MR. MOFFAT'S farm was, as I have before stated, yet in its infancy. It had been previously occupied by one of the rebel Boers, on whose refusal to return to British allegiance, it had been granted to its present owner. Some rough cultivation had been attempted, and very fine crops of wheat had been produced; but the fires which, whether lighted by careless travellers, or purposely kindled by the natives to destroy the last year's grass, annually spread over the country, had passed through the neglected farm, leavingno vestige beyond the faint marks of the plough on the surface of the soil, and a few blackened stumps where the posts of the house and the cattle-kraal had stood. A fresh beginning was to be made, and my host set about it with his usual energy. Besides the water-course before mentioned, which must have been a work of time and trouble, and along which he had sown the seeds of the *seringeboom* a strip of ground had been turned up with the spade and set with young fruit-trees and garden plants, and the ground-plan of a complete and substantial dwelling had been marked out, and a contract made for its erection.* The two workmen who had taken the contract were, as is often the case in these parts, discharged soldiers, who, attracted by the fame of the rising place, had wandered thither from the frontier in search of employment.

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* The following specification of the building contract may serve as a guide to the settler. Where wood is plentiful, wattle and dab would be the materials used, and

It was settled that they should at once take up their residence on the farm, and they accordingly returned to Harrismith for their tent and household gods, one of them having a Dutch wife. The next morning they made their appearance in a light horse-wagon, drawn in this instance by oxen, and driven by the most wretched specimen of a Boer I had yet seen. His tall lathy person was set off by a short-skirted linen shooting-jacket, evidently intended for a body rather less than the middle size, while the decidedly hang-dog expression of his countenance, otherwise passable enough, was not diminished by the mass of long coal-black hair that fell straight over his forehead, and the ample folds of a dingy white handkerchief which enveloped his throat, and was tied in a small knot in the centre. Everything about him was lank and dirty, and unwholesome. Add to this that one of his hands had been mutilated by the bursting of a gun, and you may conceive that Thys Swanepool's appearance was anything but prepossessing. He was, nevertheless, received at once into the tent and entertained as a guest. It is difficult to make any distinction in the treatment of Boers, some of whom are very decent fellows' while, with others. it is next to impossible to sit at the same table, since, if one of them should fancy that he has met with scant courtesy, the character of the host is lost, the Boers having very high theoretical notions on the subject of hospitality.

We were visited for several successive evenings by violent storms from the north-west, accompanied by tremendous thunder-claps, and

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would of course, be much cheaper. In Natal the expense would be considerably less. The agreement was for the sum of £90 to make 55,000 bricks, and to erect a house of fifty-five feet by twenty-four, containing four rooms ten feet by fifteen, one room sixteen feet square, and a pantry four feet by twelve; to put up outer and inner walls, plastered and rough-cast outside, and fine-plastered within, the roof not included. The timbers were supplied by Hans de Lange, from his forests under the Drakenberg, at the following prices:—beams, twenty-three feet long, nine broad, three and a-half thick, 13s. 6d. each; planks, twenty feet long, twelve wide, one thick (half of them cut into laths), 8s. 3d. each, sawn and delivered at Plaatberg farm; a day and a half's *trek* with a wagon. Both beams and planks were of yellow wood (*Taxus latifolia*) which is not unlike deal.

incessant flashes of lightning, the weather side of the tent presenting the appearance of one continued illumination. It was a fine yet awful sight to see the electric fluid striking against the rocky side of Plaatberg, and rebounding like a dart from the mailed crest of some veteran warrior. The old mountain is not unscathed by the many tempests he has witnessed. Huge portions of his craggy garland have been struck off, and now lie in masses around his base. The earth also bears marks of the same mighty agent, many wide and deep fissures having been opened in its surface, connected with each other by subterraneous passages. One of them was close to our tent, and formed a substitute for a kitchen, so that our position was not without its danger. But habit will reconcile one to these things, and enable men to sleep soundly, even on the crater of a volcano or the edge of a precipice. Our only discomfort arose from the rain, which flooded the tent, and strained the canvas till we expected it momentarily to burst asunder, which it would probably have done, had we not sallied out and slackened the ropes so as to give it more play; after which it stood bravely.

The variations of temperature were remarkable. On the first day of this storm the thermometer actually fell, in less than two hours, from 91° to 63° Fahrenheit. The evenings were so raw and chilly that we were glad of a pan of wood ashes to keep our teeth from chattering.

Our daily routine was seldom varied by any unusual incident, and its journal would contain little worth recording. As for work, though we now mustered several hands, I cannot say that much was done; indeed, accustomed as I had been to the constant and stirring employment of a Canadian wilderness farm, where exertion is never suffered to flag, where the axe or the plough are always at work, and the different tasks of clearing, stumping, fencing, &c., succeed one another without an interval of rest; with these reminiscences of agricultural life, I could not avoid being struck with the contrast presented by the listless inactivity, I might almost say drowsiness, that pervaded everything at Plaatberg Farm.

There was as yet but one plough in the district, and that was engaged by the rival agriculturist at Harrismith, spade cultivation was not thought of, and the only real work, the herding and tending of the cattle, milking the cows, &c., was performed by Kafirs, seven of whom had come to seek for employment, and had been engaged for a year, at the wages of a heifer a-piece, in value about £2.

These Kafirs belonged to the Makatees, who, together with five other tribes, the Corannas, the Bustards, the Barilongs, the Bataunys, and the Bassutos, form the coloured population of the Sovereignty. They are quite distinct from the Zulus, and some of them are allied to the great Bechuana family, whose language, with some variations of dialect, is I believe common to most of the tribes west of the Drakenberg. They were quick and intelligent servants, and I was surprised to observe the facility with which they caught up and imitated our methods of work, though they were probably quite new to them. In rough brick-making they soon became so handy as to be most useful assistants to the masons, who were putting up a small room of half dried bricks for their temporary accommodation while engaged in building Mr. Moffat's house.

Friend Swanepool had departed to Nelson's Kop, whence he brought back his wagon-load of reeds. He intended taking them as a return cargo to Bloem Fontein, a distance of nearly 200 miles, where they would fetch a good price for thatching. I was beginning to be ashamed of my prejudice against this man, who appeared in great distress, and complained sadly of the hard treatment he had received at the hands of his fellow-travellers, one of whom, he said, had beaten him; but I have no doubt the fellow richly deserved it. We had reason shortly afterwards to suspect him of being what one of the man called *tarry fingered*, an adhesive property, from which, to do them justice, the Dutch are singularly exempt; and our suspicions being reduced to certainty by the examination of his *voorkist*, which contained a motley assortment of pilfered goods, we resolved ourselves, in the absence of a magistrate, into a court special, and having formally signed the depositions of the witnesses, and the result of the trial, decided that he should be kept prisoner until the arrival of Paul Beste, who was shortly expected at Harrismith.

Had this happened in California, he would doubtless have been lynched on the spot; and I confess, that though no admirer of these lawless executions, I was in this case inclined to recommend the immediate infliction of the *sjambok*, and dismissal of the culprit. My motion, however, was negatived, and after detaining the miserable fellow for some days, we suffered him to steal quietly away, and right glad we all were to be rid of his presence. I have mentioned this occurrence rather to indicate its rarity than for any other reason; and I must emphatically repeat, that there are no men more honest than the Boers.

So monotonous was our existence, that the occasional appearance of a stray buck on the edge of the rock, was quite sufficient to throw us into a state of unusual excitement. Most of the men were crack shots, and the intruder generally paid dearly for his temerity. Sometimes it would be a rhee-bok (*Redunca capreolus*), with his light tapering horns; sometimes the larger, but less graceful riet-bok, the striped quagga, or the brindled gnu; nothing came amiss to us either for sport or food. The latter consideration, indeed, was by far the most important, as the flesh of the Kafir goats was not particularly fat or tender, and the continual sacrifice of oxen threatened to put an end to the herd. Not that we fared badly: excellent tea and coffee, rice and sugar; cookies, or unleavened cakes of coarse meal, baked on the gridiron, and, above all, a jar of delicious wild honey, left us little to complain of on that score. Mealies and milk, or Indian corn, pounded and boiled after the manner of oatmeal porridge, made a superb dish; and even Kafir corn, in spite of its red colour, which reminded me of a linseed mash, was not unpalatable when treated in the same way. The wild asparagus grew in profusion in the patch of bush in front of our tent, and though not equal in flavour to the cultivated plant, was a welcome addition to our table.

Meanwhile, old Schutkraal had been enjoying a season of uninterrupted rest and plenty in the rich pastures of Plaatberg, and was as frisky as a young colt. It was high time to give him a gallop, and I was anxious, besides, to make my first essay in African hunting, which my unlucky illness had so long delayed. Sir W. C. Harris and Mr. Gordon Cumming have made the reader so familiar with every detail of this sport, that I have little hope of exciting his interest in adventures which, by the side of their gigantic achievements, must sink into utter insignificance ; but it would ill become one who has undertaken to write of the *Veldt* to pass over its chief attraction ; nor as a true son of the chase, can I consent to risk the imputation of indifference or ignorance in her affairs which I should incur by silence ; so I can only promise the reader to be as brief as possible, give him fair notice to turn over, and skip, if he will, the following pages.

Behold me, then, equipped for action, not in scarlet and leathers, but in homely fustian, jacket and continuations included ; a napless green covering, of the wide-awake class, does duty for the velvet hunting-cap. The spurs are the only correct part of the turn-out, though they are somewhat out of character with the *vel schoen*, or shoes of rough brown skin. But how is this ? There is only one ! Never mind, it is the custom ; so we follow it. My horse has rather a large head to be sure, and the stirrups are not so bright as they might be, but one must not be too particular in the *Veldt*. My attendant, I should rather say my companion, Moffat's little apprentice, Jem, looks scarcely more respectable than myself ; but he sits well upon his horse, a stray one which we have found near the farm, and are keeping till the owner can be discovered ; a little exercise in the meantime will do it no harm. Jem is unarmed ; I carry, resting on my right thigh, in true Africandee fashion, a double-barrelled smooth bore ; which, as I never shoot further than I can see, I prefer infinitely to a rifle, even for ball, to say nothing of the convenience of being able to vary the charge according to the size or nature of the object which may chance to present itself, from a partridge to a lion,—and now, *vamos !*

We had ridden about five miles without seeing a living creature to relieve the eye, wearied with the endless prospect of mountain and plain, *krans*, and ant heaps, when on topping a low road, we came suddenly in sight of a herd of some fifty or sixty quaggas, which were quietly grazing about a quarter of a mile from us. We immediately turned, and keeping under the shelter of some rising ground which favoured our design, approached unperceived within a few hundred yards of them, when the chase commenced in earnest. A cloud of dust marked the course of the herd, as they dashed off at a slapping pace, followed at very unequal distances by Jem and myself at the top of our speed.

I soon found that old Schutkraal, though decidedly improved in appearance, was in no condition for a twenty minutes' hunt with twelve stone on his back; and though plied with bit and spur he was falling rapidly behind. Jem's horse, on the contrary, carrying feather-weight, held gallantly on, and soon brought his rider up with the troop, into the very centre of which he dashed, trying to separate and turn them, so as to give me the chance of a shot; in this, however, he did not succeed, and finding that I was unable to overtake him, he abandoned the pursuit, after a run of about three miles.

Had I been decently mounted, the herd would have been quite at our mercy; for these animals are no match for a horse, and if hard pressed, are soon brought to a stand-still. At a farm on the Valsch River, where a number of Kafirs were employed, a quagga was every morning singled from the herd, hunted down, and driven into the kraal, where the natives dispatched him with their assegais, and fed on the flesh, of which they are very fond. This feat was performed daily for more than a year by one horse, a large grey, or *schimmel*, the favourite colour in South Africa. I speak literally when I say that the horse performed the feat; for the rider, any Hottentot or Kafir who could sit on his back, had no share in the matter, the animal himself hunting, turning, and driving the game in the most skilful manner, and evidently enjoying the sport with the keenest zest.

Turning our heads homewards, we soon fell in with another herd, composed chiefly of blaauw wildebeests, who were eating their way towards a small opening in the ridge, behind which we had retreated the moment we caught sight of them.

As they were coming down the wind, I resolved to await them, and despatched Jem with directions to get, if possible, in their rear, and drive them into the ambush. Meanwhile I dismounted, and knowing that some time must elapse before the manœuvre could be effected, stretched myself on the stony ground (there is no turf in Africa) just below the edge of the sand, and lighting my pipe, amused myself by watching the motions of the advancing herd, which my position enabled me to do without the slightest danger of exciting their alarm, and defeating my plans for their destruction. They were headed by a large bull, evidently the father of the herd, with a long flowing mane on his neck, and a bristly beard descending down the dewlap to the breast—a noble-looking animal, whom I at once singled out for the first barrel. Now he would lie down and take a deliberate roll, the herd stopping as if to witness the grotesque exhibition; then he would engage in a mock fight with one of his subjects, the ungainly creatures butting each other with their curiously-shaped horns, and cutting the most antic capers, in evident good-humour and diversion. Suddenly a quick movement is visible in the rear of the herd; the combatants cease their game, and throwing their heads up,

"A moment snuff the tainted gale."

Another moment of indecision, and they are off, the large bull still leading, and, to my intense delight, making straight for the *poort* within sixty yards of which I am now crouching down, almost breathless with excitement, but quite determined not to throw away my first shot. As they come nearer, I stoop down till the rim of my green hat touches the grass, from which it cannot be distinguished;—and now they approach the opening, and are fairly within shot. I can scarcely contain myself, but must wait till the foremost have passed through, so that I may take them from behind. Another second of suspense—painfully long—and then a black head issues from the little pass. There is no hurry now: the sight of my gun is on the object—follows it steadily for an instant. A loud report, succeeded by that peculiar "thud" which the archer knows as the sign of a successful aim, and the fine animal is rolling in the dust, while the affrighted herd rush over the body of their late leader, and scamper wildly across the plain, one of their number carrying off with some difficulty the contents of my second barrel, which had not been aimed with equally fatal accuracy. Eager to follow up the wounded game, I turned round to look for my horse, whom I had left with the bridle-rein hanging to the ground, which ought to have been sufficient to secure his remaining in the same spot; but, to my consternation, he was nowhere to be seen, and it was not till after a hard chase that he was recaptured by Jem, who had seen his escapade from afar, and who found him, notwithstanding his assumed weariness, gallantly heading another herd of quaggas, without any appearance of exhaustion or fatigue. While engaged in pursuing him, Jem contrived to separate a young filly from the herd. The little creature, missing its mother, followed the horse willingly; keeping up with it at a fast gallop, though it did not appear to be above a fortnight old. I at once determined, if possible, to take it back to the farm and rear it; and accordingly, we not only gave up all further thought of the wounded game, but, on the principle that a live ass is better than a dead lion, decided on leaving the victim of my first shot on the field; contenting ourselves with piling stones over the carcass to secure it from the *aas vogels* or vultures, who seldom fail to discover the hunter's *cache*, and who were even now appearing like specks on the horizon, attracted from unknown distances by their unerring instincts to the scene of slaughter.

For some time the young quagga appeared perfectly contented with its new companions, galloping round and round the house, and snuffing about as if in expectation of a feed; but presently, finding itself disappointed, it set up a shrill neigh, and showed symptoms of uneasiness, and at length made a desperate attempt to escape. We managed to keep it between us, and to slip a noose over its neck, the other end of which we made fast to the head-stall of my horse. Thus deprived of liberty, the little animal made the most determined resistance, hanging back with its whole weight, darting round, kicking, snapping its jaws, as yet innocent of teeth, and exhibiting a mixture of strength, ferocity, and determination worthy of a full-grown mule, and quite wonderful in so young an animal. We then tried to hoist it on Schutkraal's back, but its violent struggles, and its weight, which was no trifle, put this out of the question; besides, we were afraid of injuring it. I then dismounted, and fastening the rein round my own waist, tried to drag it along by main force; but I was soon obliged to desist. Arriving at a pool, we moistened its lips with water, after which it followed with less reluctance, till at length we reached the tent, having accomplished about four miles in as many hours, and tied our prize to the wagon-wheel. After a general consultation, a cow's horn was prepared with a mouthpiece of soft leather, and a plentiful feed of new milk was then administered which appeared to revive it considerably. I had now leisure to observe it more attentively, and to verify a suspicion which I had all along entertained as to its correct zoological classification.

There are in South Africa three varieties of the genus Equus—the true zebra, or *wilde paard;* Burchell's zebra, or the *bonte quagga;* and the quagga, properly so called.

The two last are very common, and inhabit the plains of the Sovereignty in immense herds. The true zebra is rarer, and is found only in mountainous regions. They are easily distinguished from each other; but the generic name of quagga is erroneously applied to all,—and my knowledge of natural history was not accurate enough to determine at once the species to which my little captive belonged. From the regularity of its stripes, however, which extended over the whole body, I was inclined to think that it was a zebra, in opposition to the opinion of all on the farm, who pronounced it to be a quagga; and the question was discussed with great animation, till Sir W. Harris's work was produced, which contains a minute description of the wild animals of South Africa,—when we discovered that the mane and tail of both the quaggas were equine, and that of the zebra asinine. This decided the matter; for though my antagonists could, even though vanquished, argue still, yet there was no disputing the fact that my little filly had a donkey's tail; and upon comparing the description of the zebra with our specimen, they tallied so exactly in every point, that no doubt remained upon the subject.

My prize now became doubly valuable, as establishing the fact that the zebra inhabits the edge of the Drakenberg, which did not appear to have been previously acknowledged, and I was more than ever anxious to preserve it.

For some days, I had every reason to anticipate success; the young creature fed heartily, and was soon able to dispense with the horn, when we added a little bran or soaked meal to the milk. It became quite tame also, and would follow me about like a dog, pushing its way in between the folds of the tent, and rubbing its head against my shoulder, till I really became quite attached to it.

But, alas! the fate of all pets, whether zebras or gazelles, was not to be averted! One morning, on issuing from the tent, I found my favourite lying at the door quite dead. It had been a rough night, and I blamed myself for having turned it out the evening before, when it came in as if to ask for shelter; but I afterwards ascertained that one of the Kafirs, in his mistaken zeal, had given it boiled milk which had been the cause of its death. I half suspected that the deed was of *malice prepense*, and done with a view to the flesh; but if so, the villain was disappointed, as the hyæna came early the same evening and carried off the body from within five yards of the tent. The next morning, one or two bones picked clean, lying by the side of the *spruit*, were all that remained of my zebra filly.

About this time our party was increased, and some life infused into our dullness, by the arrival of Mr. M'Cabe, an enterprising farmer from the Bloem Fontein district, who had given up his land on the Modder River for the mountain pastures of Harrismith. He had travelled in truly patriarchal guise, with all his *vee* or live stock, consisting of a flock of five hundred Merino ewes, a herd of a hundred and forty cattle, and from fifteen to twenty horses, mares and foals.

His journey had been attended with unusual difficulties and disasters, and he gave us a melancholy account of the country through which he had passed. A severe drought had visited the district—not a blade of grass was to be seen. The cattle were dying in all directions; and those of Maroko, the friendly chief of the Barilongs, were said to have perished by hundreds. M'Cabe himself had lost several horses on the road, and all his stock was in a deplorable condition. To add to his troubles, it was lambing-time with his flock, and his mother and sister, who accompanied him, had often been obliged to share the already narrow accommodation of a loaded wagon with the new-born offspring of their sheep and cows. But discomforts and privations from which an Englishwoman would shrink with horror are little regarded by her Africandee sister, and these ladies not only appeared in excellent health and spirits, but by their cheerful activity, and that peculiar talent for making the best of everything which women alone possess, put our indolent habits to the blush, and converted our previous lethargy into something like spirit and animation. The day after his arrival we were all hard at work building a kraal for the lambs: loosening huge masses of mountain limestone from their beds, rolling them down the steep hill-side, and piling them into a rough but very substantial wall. The next day a hunting expedition was arranged; and, taking the wagon with us to carry home the game, we started with a full determination to lay in provisions for the next month at least. Our expectations, however, were deceived, and the wagon returned empty; the few herds that yet remain at this season being very wild and unapproachable, and at the slightest alarm making off for the Vlakten, where we had no time or inclination to follow them.

As we turned homewards, after giving our horses an hour's rest in the *veldt*, the clouds suddenly gathered in our rear, threatening a storm. It is no pleasant thing to be caught in an African thunder-shower, and, as the weather was "coming up," we resolved to give it a race, and endeavour to reach home before it could overtake us. We had about six miles to go, and there was no time to be lost. We had scarcely started when the storm burst forth in our rear: we could hear the pelting of the rain upon the turf behind us, and plied whips and spurs with increased energy. We had just reached the edge of our little hock, when M'Cabe's quick eye detected a jackal, on ovinary thoughts intent, stealing along the edge of the *bult*. To gallop up the steep bank, to dismount, and fire, was the work of a moment; and a broken shoulder brought the villain's predatory excursion to a premature close.

Just then the storm broke upon us in all its fury. M'Cabe's horse, startled by the vivid flashes of lightning and the terrific peals that rattled in his ears, dashed off for the tents, and, though chased by Moffat, was not overtaken till he had reached there, to the great alarm of the ladies. Meanwhile, I turned to pursue the jackal, who had limped off, on three legs, at a tolerable pace; but all my efforts failed in persuading Schutkraal to face the storm. So violent was it, that I could with difficulty keep my seat, and we had the mortification of seeing our prey disappear into his earth, from whence it was useless to attempt to dislodge him.

With these animals, and the wolves, we carried on an incessant and not very successful warfare. The wolves, especially, baffled all our attempts to capture them. Night after night their ill-omened howl would warn us of their vicinity, of which we were sure to find sad proof next morning in the diminished number of the flock. Sometimes they would devour their prey on the spot, leaving, as in the case of my zebra, only a bone or two as evidence of their audacity; and a tin flask, with a bullet in it, which we had hung round the neck of a valuable foal as a protection, was actually devoured with its wearer by one of these rapacious creatures, who, it was to be hoped, had swallowed more than he could easily digest. Grown bolder by impunity, they at length had the hardihood to attack our full-grown horses, falling upon the herd and scattering them in all directions, and dreadfully lacerating the flank of Moffat's favourite steed. The poor animal had a narrow escape. The wolf had evidently made a short spring, and having fastened only one fang in his side, had been unable to keep his hold; had both fangs been fixed, he would not have let him off so easily. At length, finding open hostilities ineffectual (for our dogs refused to face the enemy), we resorted to stratagem, which in such a case needs no apology.

"Who ever recked, or how or when
The prowling fox was trapped or slain?"

However uncongenial this sentiment may appear to the English sportsman, it would serve well for the African hunter's motto. There, too, it admits of a wider application; but our business is now with wolves.

The trap or *stel* which we used is constructed in the following manner:—A square hole is dug in the ground, into the bottom of which a forked stick is fixed—the forks downward; a loaded gun is then secured by pegs, so that the muzzle points directly over the hole, in which the bait, a piece of flesh of any kind, is next cast, tied to a string, the other end of which runs through the forks of the stick, along the barrel of the gun, and, after passing round a peg just behind the lock, is attached to the trigger. Pieces of the bait are then dragged along the ground in the neighbourhood of the *stel* to entice the wolf, who seldom fails to visit the spot. As soon as he has seized the bait and begins to pull it up from the bottom of the hole, he tightens the string, releases the trigger, and, if the *stel* is properly set, receives the bullet in his head. Our first attempt was an unfortunate one. We had set three traps, and were sitting up in the tent anxiously waiting the result, when the sound of a gun was heard, and we sallied forth, lanterns and axes in hand, dogs and men in a state of great excitement. Among the dogs was one of unusual speed and courage, for which Moffat had exchanged an ox, having seen him perform the almost unparalleled feat of running down six bles-boks (gazella albifrons) in one day. "Vanger" was a determined enemy to the wolves, who, arrant cowards as they are, would always make off when they heard his deep growl; and, this evening, knowing the cause of our *sortie*, he rushed on a-head, eager to be first at the death of his foe.

Alas! he was himself destined to be the first victim. The *stel* was untouched, and the poor hound, unable to resist the sight of the bait, pounced unsuspectingly upon it. A loud report, followed immediately by a dreadful yell, told us of our unlucky mistake, and running forward, we found the poor creature in the agonies of death, his lower jaw having been shot clean away. A blow of an axe soon put him out of pain, and we returned sad and dispirited. Vanger, however though dead, helped to avenge himself; for, having reloaded the gun, and left his body beneath it, we found a very large wolf lying beside him the next morning.

The mystery of the first gun-shot was never explained: we could only conjecture that the sound had been produced by the vibration of one of the tent-cords, which will sometimes give a loud report like that of a pistol.

As I have used the local term "wolf" so frequently, it is right I should inform the reader that the animal properly so-called does not exist in South Africa. The three varieties known in the colony respectively by the names of "wolf," "straud-wolf," and "wildehond," all belong to the genus hyæna, and are specifically distinguished as *H. crocuta*, *fusca*, and *venatica*. The last of these hunts in large packs like the true wolf; the others are solitary.

This is not the only instance of misnomer in the zoology of Africa. The leopard is promoted to the rank of the tiger, while the giraffe sinks to an ordinary camel. The Americans, falling into a similar inaccuracy of speech, do not pay a high compliment to the noble bison, by confounding him with the sinister and ungainly buffalo. It is scarcely fair to call the poor beasts "out of their names;" and, as they cannot speak for themselves, I beg to enter this plea on their behalf.

The removal of our tent to another farm of Mr. Moffat's, on the banks of the Wilge River, gave me an opportunity, which I had long desired, of testing the sport afforded by an African river to the angler. My rod was the stock of the wagon-whip, my tackle a piece of twine, terminating in a large whiting-hook, which the fish, though they tried hard, could not manage to get into their mouths. My bait was a small locust. With this homely apparatus, I contrived to deceive two or three dozen of the scaly tribe, averaging about half-a-pound a-piece. They belonged, as do all the fresh-water fish I have seen in Africa, to the *cyprinidæ*, and partook largely of the bony nature and insipid flavour which distinguishes that order, but they were sweet and wholesome, and made a pleasant variety at our table. Some of them, with long wattles or beards, reminded me of the Thames barbel; others, in colour and form, closely resembled the carp, and another sort, which rose greedily at flies, I supposed to be mullet. I am told that there is a fish in the Orange River called the barba, which grows to an immense size, and from its description, I should conceive it to be identical with the bearded fish above mentioned. I have since wetted a line in most of the Natal rivers, and always with tolerable success, as far as filling my basket was concerned, but the sport is scarcely worth the attention of the scientific angler, and would certainly not repay the discomforts of a voyage round the Cape. The emigrant, however, will not regret having taken out his fly-rod, and as he whiles away an hour, not altogether unprofitably, in the intervals of his labours, he may be pleasantly reminded of the mill-tails and shallows which he has whipped for the silvery dace on a summer's evening, by the banks of the Lee or Wandle.

My stay in the Sovereignty had now been prolonged to nearly six weeks, and I was anxious to return to Maritzburg. The absence of all means of conveyance had hitherto been the only obstacle to my departure, for though I had a horse, my state of health was not such as to allow of my risking a night in the *veldt*, should I be unable to reach a place of shelter at the end of my day's journey—a contingency which the limited powers of my nag, and the chance of wandering from the road, and losing my way, rendered not improbable. Setting this out of the question, a solitary ride of a hundred and fifty miles, offered no very enticing prospect, and it was with pleasure that I heard my host announce his intention of taking his wagon down to Natal, for the purpose of bringing up provisions for his workmen, and getting the window-frames, &c., for his new house.

I confess I was heartily weary of the Sovereignty: weary of its undulating plains and boundless prospects, its kraus-encircled mountains, its searching dust-compelling winds, its unvarying monotony. Its very sports had well-nigh ceased to interest me, and I could balance the value of a dead quagga against the toil of a long gallop under a burning sun, with a coolness which, some months before, I should have deemed impossible. Indeed, after the first novelty of the thing has worn off, this mixture of hunting and shooting becomes very tiresome; and I used to long for the music of a pack of hounds to awaken the slumbering echo, and break the silence of the desert. The idea is well worthy the attention of those who visit Africa for the sake of sport, and it could be carried out without any difficulty. The pack should be of a race that would unite the necessary speed for the pursuit of the antelope, with the strength to pull down the "wildebeest" or the savage hyæna,—say a cross between the blood-hound and Scotch deer-hound.

The head quarters of the hunt might be at Harrismith, which had increased to seventeen houses before I left South Africa, and bids fair soon to double the number; the dogs would keep themselves in food, and there is no lack of pasture for the horses which are here exempt from the diseases which prevail to so fatal an extent both beyond the Vaal and below the mountains. The Boers and farmers around would gladly join in such a scheme, and would give early intimation of the whereabouts of the herds, especially of the rarer and more valued animals, such as the eland and the hartebeest, (*acronotus caama*), which would secure one against that worst of evils,—a blank day.

I dare say the old African hunter will laugh at the attempt of a six months' tourist to introduce English innovations into his accustomed method of chace, but let the reader judge for himself if he should ever have the opportunity; and when he has carried a heavy double barrel on a fidgety horse through the long summer's day, or, on recovering his scattered senses after a heavy fall, has found his favourite rifle snapped short off at the stock, beyond all possibility of repair,—when these and many other annoyances have befallen him, he will not think my suggestion altogether unreasonable. The gun is all very well in a bush country or in the long grass, where it is uncertain whether a leopard or an antelope may spring up under the feet of the pedestrian, but in the open plain, where stalking is not easily practised, and a fair run must generally decide the event, it is little better than an incumbrance; whereas, such ground is peculiarly adapted for hunting, as it presents no obstacle to check the speed of the pack or to throw them off the scent. A light carbine or pistol might still be carried in case of need, as the "wildebeest" sometimes shows fight; but few beasts, except the lion, would be a match for two or three dozen well-bred dogs, and I doubt if the king of beasts himself would like to face them.

Now that Africa, thanks to Mr. Gordon Cuming, is likely to become as fashionable as the moors, I seriously recommend this hint to those who wish to make the most of a single season. They will avoid the great expense and trouble, as well as the loss of time incident to a journey beyond the Vaal; they will not be at the mercy of Hottentot servants, nor be subject to the interference of rebel Boers, nor will they see their cattle and horses sicken and die one after the other till, as sometimes happens, scarcely one in twenty survives. They will be within easy reach of the coast, and in direct communication with it, as the overland mail between Natal and the Cape passes Harrismith once a-fortnight; and with all these advantages there would be no counterbalancing disproportion in the amount of slaughter which seems now-a-days to be the chief point. As for the few animals of the larger kind which are not to be found there, such as the elephant and giraffe, a short excursion into the Zulu country, below the Drakenberg, or towards the sources of the Vaal, will place the hunter in the midst of them. Natal will supply others that may be wanting, and thus, with one or two exceptions, every variety of African game may be obtained within two hundred miles of the ports and within the limits of British protection.

The best season would be the winter, from March to September, when, as I have before observed, all the game flocks to the highlands; in the other months it would be easy to shift the quarter to Winberg, or to Bloem Fontein, where there is always a detachment of officers, and pleasant society.

Another great recommendation to such a place as I have proposed is, that it would involve a comparatively small outlay, while an expedition beyond the Vaal is a very expensive affair. Sir W. C. Harris, I believe, estimates the cost of his journey at £800. It is true that there is the possibility of a return from the sale of ivory, &c., but it is a possibility so remote, and against which the chances are so numerous, that I should have little faith in a calculation based on such visionary grounds. The keen Africandee hunter, and trader by profession, or the hardy Boer with every advantage that local knowledge and experience can give, are often deceived in their expectations of gain; but the amateur who ventures with such a hope is pretty sure to be disappointed, and will most likely come out, to use Uncle Sam's expression, "at the small eend of the horn." It is at best a wild speculation, quite out of the province of the tourist or sportsman.

On the other hand, I am confident that the whole expenses of a hunting establishment in the Sovereignty, supposing it to be kept for six months, would not exceed £100, and in this I would include the *trek* to and from the port, purchase of horses, Kafir servants, &c. The equipment, I suppose, brought out from England. I have not counted the price of the wagon and oxen, because they might be sold at a very slight loss at the end of the season, as might the horses, if judiciously purchased. The chief thing for such a party to avoid, if they wish to study economy, is the appearance of travelling *en grand seigneur*, since Natal prices are apt to vary with the supposed means of the purchaser, and are not always the same to the emigrant and the tourist. Such birds are as yet too raw to escape plucking, unless they are gifted with more caution than English travellers are wont to exhibit, or have the assistance of an experienced friend in the colony. At all events, there is perhaps no other place in the world where so much sport may be obtained at so small an expense, and in spite of the disturbed state of Africa, and the evil anticipations of alarmists, I expect to see Natal become the rendezvous of the adventurous youth of England, for whom the pastimes of their native land cannot yield sufficient variety or excitement.

If they return with renewed zest to home pursuits and home amusements, they will have gained something by the experiment; for my own part, I have long ago learned that lesson, and can fully sympathize with the talented author of "Hochelaga" who, after a vivid description of a Canadian moose-hunt, with all the novelty of night encampments, snow shoes, and Indian guides, and all the charm of lake and forest scenery to heighten the effect, is fain to exclaim "One day with the Tarporley were worth them all!"

But I must not bid adieu to the Sovereignty without a brief review of its qualifications as a field for emigration, in which I shall confine my observations to the Vaal River district, both because it contains more available land than any of the others, and because, lying adjacent to Natal, its prosperity must be ever more or less connected with, and dependent on, that colony.

I have already said enough to show that it is even less fitted than other parts of Africa to support a concentrated agricultural population. There are not, upon an average, more than five acres in a thousand, where irrigation is practicable, so as to prepare the soil for the production of wheat and other grains. Where this facility exists the crops have been plentiful, and free from rust, and the natives succeed in producing their *mealies* and Kafir corn without using other water than that which falls from heaven—but it is yet to be proved that wheat, and other European seeds, would flourish under a similar treatment. For the present, however, the land can be turned to better purpose, and the occupiers of a large pastoral farm is quite content if, with the most slovenly tillage, he can keep his Kafir servants in *mealies*, and grow a few vegetables for his own consumption.

For sheep walks the merits of the land are beyond dispute; the only doubt that existed whether the climate of the winter might not prove too severe for the fine-woolled merinos has been, ere this, solved by Mr. M'Cabe. If, as I cannot but anticipate, it has been found necessary to house them, the difficulty of finding material for sheds will be a serious drawback. To the breeder of stock, and of horses more especially, this country offers a rich source of profit. Mares may be purchased on the borders of the Cape colony at from £2 to £5 a-piece, and each male foal of ordinary breed at two years old will be worth from £10 to £15 at Pieter Maritzburg.* There are no intermediate expenses. The herd roam at large, requiring no care beyond that of a Kafir boy, by whom they are driven in every night in order to accustom them to be handled, and also as a protection against the wolf, the chief, indeed the only, source of anxiety to the stock farmer. Disease and drought are unknown, and perhaps there is no occupation in which the risks are so small, or the income so sure. On the other hand, there is the expense of house-building, and the difficulty of providing even the common comforts and conveniences which can give the appearance of home to the most desolate spot. All ideas of neatness, order, and compact arrangement, must be discarded. The trim court, the inclosed garden, the fenced field, must henceforth exist only in imagination; instead of these a solitary house standing out from the bare plain, a cattle kraal of rough stones, a small place inclosed by a sod wall to serve as kitchen or dwelling for the Kafirs, a patch of ploughed ground, lying open to the visits of bucks, or the passage of the herd who gallop unrestrainedly over it, perhaps a reed shed for the calves. Such are the premises of an African stock-owner's farm. He must be content, too, with a lonely existence, or the company of chance visitors, not always preferable to that of his Kafir herdsmen, and he will be lucky if his nearest neighbour is within two or three hours' ride. Some of these disadvantages may be traced to the indolent habits and indisposition to improvement which have hitherto characterized the owners of the soil, who, as long as their herds increased, were content to lead a desultory, hand-to-mouth existence, and to leave no better prospect to their children; but the greater part of them are inseparable from the nature of the country and the character of the occupation; and, on the whole, this account may be taken as a fair specimen of stock-farming in the Sovereignty.

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* Mr. Lindley, a farmer in the neighbourhood of Bloem Fontein, lately imported a horse from England, for whose stock he finds eager purchasers at £30,—a high price in Africa for unbroken colts. The value of the foal depends entirely on the reputation of the sire, while very little attention is paid to the quality and breed of the mares; this is chiefly owing to an absurd prejudice against their use, which has always existed amongst the Dutch, and which made it almost a disgrace to be seen riding them.

It is obvious that however profitable such pursuits as these might prove to a few enterprising individuals, they would not be sufficient to support a large population, or to give assurance of prosperity to a newly founded town, and Harrismith would never emerge from insignificance had it not a more secure and ample source of wealth to depend upon.

The commerce with the interior is yearly increasing in importance, and the discovery of the Great Lake, and the researches of such men as Messrs. Osuell, Hamilton, and others, are likely to open up new fields for the restless sons of trade, and to pave the way for the introduction of British manufactures into the very heart of Africa. The twelve thousand Dutch malcontents beyond the Vaal, though they have done their best to put themselves beyond the pale of civilization, and to stop the current of improvement towards the regions which they are yet permitted to retain, cannot be altogether independent of supplies from the Port, or the chief towns of the colony; and the road to the Mooi Dorp, the capital of their territory, is constantly traversed by wagons loaded with merchandize for the self-exiled people. The missionary establishments, too, contribute not a little to swell the extent of this traffic, the greater part of which, since the occupation of Natal, finds its way over the Drakenberg, and must pass through Harrismith, thus making it the rendezvous of the traders from every side. Here the Natal merchants will establish stores to supply their inland customers, who will gladly unload their wagons on that side of the mountain, and spare their oxen the toilsome journey through the hilly roads and unhealthy climate of Natal, with the chance of swollen rivers to prevent their return. Thus, in addition to a constant succession of passing visitors, a resident population will spring up, under whose auspices the *dorp* will rapidly rise in importance. Farms will no longer be suffered to lie waste and unimproved, but will be covered with flocks of sheep, and herds of cattle and horses; the qualities of the soil will be ascertained and turned to the best advantage, and Harrismith will justify the praise of its supporters, by becoming the first city of the northern Sovereignty!

I will not weary the reader with the details of our journey back to Natal, which could contain nothing novel or interesting.

We left Plaatberg on the 2nd of December, and the following day descended the mountain without accident or difficulty. Not far from its foot, close to the head waters of the Klip River, I descried a tent at some distance from the road, indicating a new settler's location, and as on the *veldt* a human habitation of any kind is seldom passed unvisited, I threw the saddle on my horse, and galloped across to make a passing call, and satisfy my curiosity. As I drew near I was struck with the extreme beauty of the situation, which had evidently been chosen rather by a lover of the picturesque than by a mere practical farmer. It was one of those little nooks, formed by the projecting roots of the Drakenberg which I have mentioned in a former chapter as constituting part of the scenery at its base. In front rose a thickly-wooded bank, with green sides sloping gently down to the newly-born stream, whose banks had not yet assumed the broken and precipitous appearance that African rivers are wont to present, but were soft and rounded like those of an English meadow brook. On all sides the rising ground shut out the dreary prospect, and gave a sheltered appearance to the spot, very different from the open plains of the Sovereignty. As I was following with my eye the mazy windings of the stream through the rushy *vlei* beyond, I was accosted by a shout of welcome from a well-known voice, and turning round recognized my fellow-passenger W——, the importer of the Scotch cart. After the first exclamations of surprise and greeting he told me that—being resolved not to settle on a place without trees—he had traversed Natal in the vain search for land which united the required condition with other eligible qualities, till, chance conducting him to this spot, he determined to pitch his tent here, and had purchased a hundred acres from the Boer to whom they belonged—and who turned out to be our old acquaintance De Lange—for the apparently moderate sum of £10 (one-half the price of Crown land in Natal). Hans was too glad to catch a purchaser, and made ample promises of assistance, to which W—— had given more credit than they deserved. He had since been struggling against a host of hardships and difficulties, before which a less determined spirit would have quailed. His Kafir servants had deserted him, as they are apt to do, either from caprice or from some misunderstanding, which a knowledge of their language might have prevented, and for a long time he was unable to find a white man to supply their place. "Do you see that fellow?" said he, pointing to a most suspicious-looking character who was sauntering along with a few sticks under his arm, "he is a runaway sailor, and came to me in great distress. He is sullen, lazy, and impudent, and yet I hardly dare find fault with him much less give him the thrashing he richly merits, lest he should leave me. Worthless as he is I cannot well do without him, and he knows it. I have got a few *mealies* in, and have been trying to make a garden, but the ground is so hard that after breaking three spades I have been obliged for the present to give up the attempt. For food we live on *mealie* cakes, eggs, and milk, thinking ourselves lucky if we get a piece of meat once in the three weeks. The worst part of the business is the tent, which, while it affords but a poor shelter from the rain, is a perfect oven in sunshine, and in a high wind threatens to fall upon our heads. There is as yet no sign of the house which De Lange promised to put up for me, and I find, now that I have paid for the land, that I cannot reckon much upon his assistance. If I add that I have been for some time without tobacco I believe my catalogue of miseries will be completed. For the rest we were never in better health, and my wife, who was rather disheartened at first, is beginning to be reconciled to her lot, and, as you see, takes her share of the duties of the farm." And I hastened to pay my respects to Mrs. W——, who, neat and cheerful as ever, was busily milking a very vicious-looking cow. "Do not come too near," said she, as she held out her hand, "Mietje might kick; she will let no one touch her; but with me she is as quiet as a lamb. Ar'nt you, Mietje?" and Mietje gave a peculiar shake of her horns, which I believe was intended as an acknowledgment. I spent a pleasant evening with my friends, who were loth to let me depart, and at length took leave, charged with sundry commissions at Maritzburg, which I duly executed. I have never heard of them since, and I dare say they are still in their tent working as hard and as cheerfully as ever; but though the land is certainly equal, if not superior, to the average in point of fertility, and though W—— is one of those characters that seem made for fighting an up-hill game, I fear it will be a long time before their labours will produce any material effect towards the improvement of their condition. Situated in a remote corner, amongst a population entirely Dutch, and at so great a distance from any market, they have fearful odds to contend against, and should they succeed they will shew that the downright perseverance of an English gentleman can baffle the calculations of the most experienced Dutch farmers, and triumph over all obstacles.

We reached Bushman's River on the 7th. Mrs. Flory welcomed me back to civilized life with her best curtsey, and, still better, with a real Sunday dinner of roast beef and plum-pudding, and a bottle of pale ale, which, as she observed, after coming from "those savage parts," I was in a disposition to enjoy thoroughly. My appearance, I fear, must have fully justified the good lady in her remark, for when, on our arrival at the Umgeni, I encountered at Lodge's door a well-dressed *pic-nic* party, with several of whom I was acquainted, the ladies started back, and gave me, as Lodge had it, "a wide berth," while my friend Charles Fyvie, who evidently felt called upon to assert his dignity as the *Cavalier des dames,* stared up in my face with a look of cool astonishment, which seemed to say, "Pray, sir, have you not mistaken the room?" I began to think I had, and to recollect that a dress such as I have described in the early part of this chapter, with a beard of two month's growth, were not exactly fitted for appearing in respectable society. So I retreated to the kitchen, took my glass of beer there in quiet obscurity, and did not mount Schutkraal for a twelve mile gallop into Maritzburg, till a razor and the pick of my scanty wardrobe had metamorphosed me into something less savage and alarming.

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CHAPTER IX.

A MORNING AT CHRISTMAS TIME—THE CAVALCADE—THE SETTLER'S HUT—FOREST SCENERY—SCHUTKRAAL IN DISTRESS—A KAFIR MISSIONARY—FINGERS BEFORE FORKS—A GROTESQUE SCENE—A PLEASANT BED-FELLOW—THE DARGLE—GOOD QUARTERS—THE KAFIR PATH—A HALT IN THE RAIN—GOOD TIDINGS—BREAD AND BUTTER—SPYOEN KOP—KAFIR POLICE THE ALARM—BARE-LEGGED—THE DEAD OX—THE GUEST—ALL IN VAIN—THE WAR DANCE—CORPORAL CORK—BALL PRACTICE—THE RIDE HOME—DISMOUNTED—A CLEAN SPILL—A SLIPPERY DESCENT—E—— AT HOME.

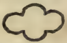
CHRISTMAS in the southern hemisphere! the thermometer at 86°, and everybody panting for shade! all superfluous clothing discarded! linen jackets and straw hats! ripening grapes, and grass breast high! Who could recognize Christmas in such guise? Where is

> "The scattered hair with sleet like ashes filled,
> The breath congealed upon the lips."

Where are the snug carpeted room, the close drawn curtains, the lighted tapers, the blazing Yule Log? Surely it must be a dream!

Such were my thoughts as, on returning from a moonlight ride, with which we had concluded our Christmas festivities, I gazed from my bed-room window just before sunrise, on the 26th of December. A gauzy heat-mist hung in the air, through whose transparent veil the landscape seemed invested with a softness foreign to its character, while a streak of pale pink from behind the sable-mountain heralded the dawn, and spread a warm blush over the sky. It was just the morning for a pleasure excursion, and to such a purpose we had directed it, having made up a party the previous evening for a visit to Spyoen Kop, a post of the Kafir police, near the Kathlamba mountains, about thirty-five miles due west of Maritzburg. We had been invited to accompany Mr. Houel, a captain of the corps who was proceeding thither on duty. I say *we*, for I had returned to my old quarters, where there were just enough resident boarders to form a pleasant little coterie, independent of chance visitors and passing guests, so that "Balcony House," or "The Coonery," as it was jokingly called, wore rather the air of a club than a place of public entertainment.

Our host E——, a jovial Irishman, whose good humour and drollery contributed to make his house agreeable, was on this occasion to make his first essay in African horsemanship, and we anticipated no small amusement from the exhibition. My two friends J. and C. F——, with one more, completed our party.

Climbing the steep hill, whose ascent had cost us so much trouble with the wagon two months before, we turned off the main Drakenberg road, and cantered gaily along a narrower but still perceptible track, which in about three hours brought us to the farm of an English settler, remarkable for the peculiar construction of the dwelling-house. It was composed entirely of sticks and grass, like a Kafir hut, but instead of being shaped like a single bee-hive, it was like two divided, and put together thus , and the elevation at a distance gives us the idea of half a gigantic melon. The rough and simple materials were so neatly put together as to have quite a finished appearance, and a little porch completed the effect, and made it look not only habitable but really elegant, and certainly much more suited to the country than a staring white house, such as is to be seen on most of the Dutch farms. Proceeding onward, we crossed the Umgeni by a ford called "Old Man's Drift," and towards evening entered on a wooded and highly picturesque landscape, such as I did not believe to have existed in Natal. There was no line of demarcation to show where the plain ended and the forest began; but the two were insensibly blended; patches of yellow sward running in among the trees, and clumps of bush standing out in the open field, till one might almost fancy oneself in an English park. Occasionally yelping of curs, and perhaps a thin column of smoke, would announce the vicinity of a Kafir kraal, for the natives prefer a bush country, and display great taste in the choice of a situation. Engrossed with the scene, I had lagged some way behind my comrades, and in pushing forward to overtake them was surprised to find Schutkraal exhibit unequivocal symptoms of fatigue, which I discovered to proceed from a galled back, the result of my carelessness in omitting the saddle-cloth. The poor horse flagged more and more, and by the time I had joined the rest of the party, who had waited for me, it became quite clear that his day's work was done, and that we must look out for shelter for the night. Mr. Howell's knowledge of the country was now invaluable: guided by him we struck across the *Veldt*, and soon descried a cluster of huts, and a dingy-looking hovel surrounded by a patch of mealies, and other signs of cultivation. This was the residence of Barnabas, a Kafir teacher, placed here by one of the missionaries for the enlightenment of his brethren, a task which he performed no doubt to his own entire satisfaction, and on the strength of which he lived in a mud-house instead of a hut, wore a shirt and trousers, spoke with a peculiar snuffle, and thought himself a civilized man.

Here it was decided that four of our party should remain, making what arrangements we could for passing the night, while the other two proceeded to the house of a settler in the neighbourhood, on whose hospitality we did not think it fair to intrude six hungry travellers. The condition of my steed left me no alternative, and those who have experienced the misery of riding a tired horse will conceive with what delight I threw saddle and bridle on the grass, and after a long draught of *amaas*, or sour milk, the most wholesome and refreshing beverage in the world, sat down to the enjoyment of a comfortable pipe, a luxury which none but a traveller on the *Veldt* can thoroughly appreciate.

Smoke, however, though a capital thing in its way, is a poor substitute for solid food; and, as our breakfast had been an early one, we soon began to think about supper. On questioning Barnabas as to the state of his larder, he pointed to some ambiguous creatures pecking about the door of his house, from which we concluded that

"The meat which we must sup withal
It runneth yet on foot."

The Kafir *inkoko*, or fowl, be it known, is not so particular in its choice of food, as to be considered a delicacy, and my friend, Charles Fyvie, was at first inclined to turn up his nose at the idea, but fastidiousness has little chance with a keen appetite, a bargain was soon struck with Barnabas, who, after a little haggling, consented to sell us three for a shilling, and in a very short time the fowls were transferred to the pot, together with some Kafir corn, the only thing in the shape of grain or vegetable which we could discover. E—— acted as executioner, and reminded me of a similar scene which I had once witnessed in a rural inn in France, when the hostess, a fat good-natured old widow, performed the operation with a pair of scissors that dangled at her girdle, exclaiming, as the creature fluttered in her grasp, "*Ah le vilain, il ne veut pas mourir!*" E—— was not exactly pleased at the comparison.

I was roused from a short nap by the announcement that supper was ready, and could not avoid being struck with the novelty of the scene. A scanty fire in the centre of the hut shed an uncertain light on the rude walls and grotesque figures within. On either side two of our party lay stretched upon the mud floor, their heads propped upon their hands, and looking, if one might judge by their countenances, not very happy or comfortable. Barnabas, who had superintended the cooking, sat crouched against the wall, with his chin resting upon his knees, with less of curiosity than contempt in his stolid countenance, while his little fat children could only be distinguished in their remote corner by the sparkle of their eyes through the smoky atmosphere. To complete the picture, Schutkraal had poked his head over the door sill, as if to see what was going on. For my own part, I had spent too many nights in the open air, not to be thankful for any shelter, and I did my best to encourage my companions by setting to work at once upon the fare. Our only weapon was a pocket-knife, and our carving, which was none of the neatest, was finished by two of us taking a leg each, and tearing the bird asunder. The small grains of the Kafir corn were a complete puzzle; and after sundry attempts to ladle them out of the pot on the end of a knife, we decided that they were not worth the trouble. Our repast being accomplished, and Barnabas having discreetly retired with his wife and family into the inner compartment of their luxurious house, we folded our jackets under our heads to serve as pillows, and were soon fast asleep. I can answer at least for myself, and so could poor E—— to his cost, for when I shook him a little before daybreak, and asked how he had passed the night: "How should I have passed it," said he, "when you've been taking me for Schutkraal the whole time. When next you mean to go out hunting in your sleep, I'd advise you to take off your spurs before you lie down—you have given me a dose of riding for once." There was no choice for him but to mount again, and we started under the conduct of Barnabas for Mr. Fanning's place, The Dingle, where we hoped to rejoin our friends. A ride of half an hour along a broken path brought us to the spot, which is really not unworthy of its name. Seated in a romantic glen, with a group of fine trees behind the house, a brawling stream in the bottom, and a thick forest on the opposite side, broken here and there by glades, seen, too, through the medium of the grey morning mist, it almost realized my fairest dream of a woodland home. Cultivation was making way in this wild valley, and true taste was not wanting to complete what nature had so well begun. We found our two friends in a Kafir hut close to the house, with matted floor, and all the appurtenances of a comfortable bed-room. They were very loth to be disturbed, but we were not disposed to pity them, especially when they began to speak of the pleasant evening they had spent in the enjoyment of music and agreeable conversation. Nor was it any consolation to us that Mr. Fanning had sent us a leg of *hartebeest* the night before, which his lazy Kafir had not brought till just as we were starting. A good cup of coffee set us all to rights, and having, as we thought, obtained ample directions for the way, which was said to be but slightly marked, we proceeded on our journey. The track led us round deep *kloofs*, and up and down precipitous hills, for a mile or two, when, at the edge of a wood, it suddenly deserted us, and after half an hour's wandering in the vain attempt to recover it, it became a question not very easily answered in which way lay the Dingle, or Spyoen Kop, or Maritzburg. Very pleasant this in a country like Africa on a wet day, and in a fog so thick that you could scarcely see a foot before you, and appeared to be riding a headless horse. We plodded on, however, for several hours, till falling into a Kafir path, we reached the top of a stony hill. Here it was agreed that we should wait, while Howell, who was the best mounted, rode on to explore. The rest of us off-saddled, and sat down, with very little confidence as to the result. Poor E—— was quite overcome, and after registering a vow, that if he once reached Balcony House, no one should ever tempt him into the *Veldt* again, he threw himself down flat upon a stone and forgot his sorrows in sleep. We waited a long time, and had just resolved to return to a neighbouring *kloof*, and to light a fire, when to our great joy we beheld a Kafir approaching at the regular trot which these fellows will keep up for twenty-four hours at a stretch, and bearing a note on the end of a cleft stick—their usual method of carrying letters. Our guide, it was proved, had led us as directly as if his course had been steered by a compass, and the few words he had written conveyed a well-merited rebuke of the mistrust which some of our party had evinced in his judgment—"Don't try to teach old colonists the road."

Following our sable Mercury, we soon reached the farm of Maritz, a hospitable Dutchman, who entertained us with a plentiful supply of bread and butter. Another mile and we were at the Post, and never did any one utter a more hearty sigh of relief than E——, as he slowly and wearily disengaged himself from his nag, Otaheite, and descended to *terra firma*, congratulating himself that one half of his penance was at an end.

The cluster of tents and huts which formed the station was pitched at one end of a wide plain, bounded by distant mountains; behind rose a long bare ridge, forming a sheltering wall, while close on the left was a beautiful green hoek, surrounded by banks of thick bush, with some fine timber. They rose to a great height, and, running on in a straight line for many miles, constituted the boundary to the plain in that direction. Immediately around the little settlement were signs of industry and improvement. Patches of ground had been turned up and were covered with fair crops; the frame of a large wattle-and-dab house had been erected for the residence of the officer in command, and an extensive garden was laid out and partly cultivated.

The Kafir Police was established partly with a view to repress the predatory incursions of the Bushmen, partly to assist in confining the natives to their respective locations, and partly as a check against Panda, who seemed inclined to pursue his fugitive subjects across the border. It amounted at one time to two hundred men, but has since, owing to the inability of the Natal Treasury to defray the expense of its maintenance, been reduced to its original complement, viz.:—A native force of 5 sergeants, 5 corporals, and 90 men, commanded by European officers—1 captain, 2 lieutenants, and a sergeant-major. Mr. T. Shepstone, the diplomatic agent, whose influence over the natives is universally acknowledged, and who is looked up to by them as the great "Samson" or "Sagem" of their tribes, holds the chief command in this corps, which, without his assistance, would never have been organized. Its efficacy has never been tested in any great emergency, but it has been tried; nor is there any reason to doubt that the experiment, if carried out upon a larger scale, would answer equally well. It is something, at all events, to accustom the Kafir to pay obedience to the white man, a habit he is too apt to unlearn. The number of officers has lately been increased; a patriotic young emigrant having volunteered his gratuitous services, which, as he had been an officer in the army, were doubly valuable. But to return to our narrative.

I had taken off my wet top-boots, and was paddling about in the stream in all the luxury of bare legs, when I was startled by the voice of E——, whom I had left fast asleep in the hut.

"Make haste," said he, "five lions have just killed an ox of Maritz's, and are now gorging on the carcass!"

Guns were seized, horses were frantically caught and saddled, "and there was mounting in hot haste." I soon gave up an ineffectual attempt to pull on my boots, and throwing myself, bare-legged as I was, into the saddle, set off at full gallop after the rest of the party, who had started some minutes before. My galled and jaded steed, catching some of his master's enthusiasm, scarcely needed the spur, and passing first E——, for whom the pace was too good, and then the armed body of police, running at the top of their speed, with the sergeant-major at their head, I overtook Howell and the rest, and we pressed onwards towards the scene of action.

There lay the dead ox, with a hind leg broken, and the marks of the lion's paw on flank, shoulder, and face. Maritz was standing over the victim, uttering many a pitiful exclamation, mingled with threats of vengeance on the spoilers, but busily engaged meanwhile in taking off the skin that he might save what he could before they returned, which they were sure to do after dark, as they had been disturbed from their feast by the shouts of the herdsman, and had made off into the bush close by. We were all impatience to follow them, but Howell, who was an experienced hunter, convinced us of the impossibility of attempting it at so late an hour, so that our excitement for that day ended in a quiet ride home, a capital dinner of beef and mealies, and anticipations of to-morrow's sport over a glass of cognac.

Sleeping on the floor of the hut, wrapped in a soldier's coat, and with our heads on our saddles, we suffered much from cold, though it was midsummer—the door, which was of reeds loosely fastened together, serving rather to increase the draught than to exclude the outward air.

The next morning we rose in high spirits, and eager for the chase. Our toilet and breakfast were soon over, and, all armed except E——, who declared he was more likely to shoot himself than the lion, we sallied forth. It was a pretty sight to see the Kafirs in their white shirts and black belts, their bayonets gleaming in the rays of the morning sun, treading in single file the mountain path before us. Still more interesting was it when we had reached the place of slaughter which the lions had visited again in the course of the night, to observe how the Kafirs hunted up the spoor, spreading themselves over the ground, examining every mark of the lion's paws, which, though as large as a man's hand, were only visible at distant intervals, till at length they hit off the last track, and followed it up to the edge of the bush. Just inside we found the marks of their lair, and there was little doubt that they were still within the circuit of the wood.

And now, lest the reader fall into the same mistake with ourselves, and work himself into a very unnecessary fit of excitement, I may as well disappoint him at once. In vain did the Kafirs, in open line and with bayonets fixed, traverse the tangled forest once and again from end to end, filling the air with their shouts; in vain did we, posted in pairs at the most likely points of exit, anxiously listen for the slightest sound that might indicate the approach of the royal game, exhorting one another to stand firm in case of a charge. The lions kept close; and without dogs it was impossible to rouse them. So after riding up the perpendicular sides to the top of the ridge, whence we got a fine view of the Mooi and Bushman's Rivers, and the whole country, from the Maritzburg hills on the one side, to the Drakenberg on the other, we were obliged to return to the camp without accomplishing our object!

To console us for our disappointment, Howell entertained us with a Kafir war dance, of which I cannot hope to convey more than a very faint impression. The Kafirs formed themselves into a semicircle, and began by slowly moving feet and arms to a monotonous tune. Growing more and more excited, their action increased in energy and fierceness, their songs became louder, till at length there was a perfect storm of singing, yelling, and stamping, the latter, especially, so regular and violent, as to leave a deep dent in the hard soil. Throughout the whole of the manœuvres, they kept the most correct time with voice, arms, and feet, and observed an evident method in the midst of the apparent tumult and disorder. We were particularly amused with the coolness of Corporal Cork, a squat little figure, whose appearance with the welcome cup of coffee in the morning was always hailed with delight, and who, on the strength of his position as attendant on the white men, did not think it necessary to over-exert himself, and though he joined in the movements of his brethren, seemed to consider the whole affair as a good joke, and grinned familiarly at us, as much as to say that he only did it to humour them. There was no dent in the ground where he stood.

After this the men were ordered to bring their muskets, and we had an opportunity of witnessing their skill in ball practice, which was very tolerable. The mark was a stone, the distance about a hundred and fifty yards; and though they handled their pieces in all sorts of queer ways, some firing before the musket was at their shoulder, while others held it there for a minute or two, yet the stone was repeatedly struck, and on the whole I have seen worse shooting among regular soldiers.

We spent three pleasant days at Spyoen Kop, and then bid adieu to our kind entertainer, and started on our homeward *trek*, not without some apprehensions as to the possibility of accomplishing it withn the day. We chose the wagon road, which, though longer, was easier to find, and which, besides, would lead us over a new country. We passed through the same beautiful forest scenery which I have already described, and saw several well-kept farms, with brick houses and buildings upon them, and the only incident which occurred before we reached Umgeni was a chance shot at a bosch-bok (*Tragelaphus sylvatica*). Long before this, poor Schutkraal was reduced to a walk, and when we off-saddled on the other side of the drift, we had the pleasant prospect of sixteen miles at a foot's pace under a pelting rain, for I was obliged to dismount, and could not persuade my companions to push on and leave me.

Many a laugh we had enjoyed that day at the expense of poor E——, whose short figure, clothed in a long shooting-jacket of mine, bobbing up and down upon his saddle (no easy-chair to him), was a perpetual source of merriment. But the tables were now to be turned. After I had trudged on for some miles, my friends so kindly persisted in offering to relieve me, that I at length acceded, and mounted a spirited little horse of Charles Fyvie's, who undertook the difficult task of leading, or rather dragging, Schutkraal along, while I insisted on carrying his gun in addition to my own, confident of my horsemanship, and disregarding my friend's warning, "that Wiltshire was not to be trifled with." He was right enough: no sooner did the little animal feel the increased weight, and the contact of the barrel with either shoulder, than he arched his back, sprung up in the air, and commenced a kicking pirouette, which would have done honour to Astley's, but was anything but agreeable to his rider. With a gun under each arm, I had no possible control over him; and as I saw the catastrophe was inevitable, I loosened my feet from the stirrup, and taking a flying leap over his head, found myself sitting comfortably on the ground. It was fortunate that no accident occurred, for one of the guns, of which I had never lost my hold, was discovered to be full cocked, the hammer having sprung back in the fall. I need not say on which side the laugh was now!

I have described the ascent of the Maritzburg hill; but its descent was, if possible, worse. It was, in fact, one complete slide; and as we led our horses along, for riding was out of the question, we were in continual danger of pulling them upon us. E——, who had gone on to order dinner, was soon so bewildered by the fog, that he lost the little notion he had of the road, and was possessed with a vague idea that he was returning to Spyoen Kop; and it was not till the walls of Fort Napier stood close before him, and he was almost within the town, that his illusion was dispelled.

"They may talk of the pleasures of the *Veldt*," said he, that evening, as he was helping the soup at the head of his table; "but those who think it pleasant to be bumped about all day, and spurred all night—to be wet through in a mist one hour, and dried in the sun, like a piece of beltong, the next—faith! it's a droll notion of pleasure they've got, anyhow."

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CHAPTER X.

THE WAY-SIDE INN—UNCORKING—THE HUT—GENTLEMEN INNKEEPERS—MY FATHER WAS A SWEEP—FINE FEATHERS—GO AND SLEEP IN THE VELDT—DUTCH HOSPITALITY—HOW TO BEHAVE—HOLD YOUR TONGUE—SWOLLEN RIVERS—FATAL ACCIDENT—FATHER AND SON—SCHUTKRAAL IN A FIX—THE UMGENI—DRIFT AT MIDNIGHT—THE KAAR-KLOOF FALLS—THE COUNTRY-SEAT—DEVONSHIRE CREAM.

THOSE who wish to see life in a colony in its most genuine, though not, perhaps, its most attractive form, cannot choose a better field for their obervations than the wayside inn. With the reader's permission we will take a peep at one of them, having first divested ourselves, as much as possible, of every notion of such a place which our European experience may suggest.

An hour's sharp canter out of the town brings us in sight of a neat little white house, standing prettily among straggling thickets of mimosa, on a rising swell above the *spruit* whose rapid and dangerous rise I have mentioned in an early chapter. This is the residence of Mr. L——, the landlord at Uys' Doorns, to whom we are going to pay a visit. As we draw nearer, we can detect a Kafir hut within a few yards of the house. This is the inn. Let us ride up and dismount—cautiously, though, for the ground is strewed with empty beer bottles, mostly with broken necks, having been opened by a stroke with the back of a knife, an equally effectual and more expeditious method than the legitimate cork-screw.

We are surprised to find in the landlord, who comes out to receive us, in his shirt sleeves, probably without shoes or stockings, a distinguished-looking person, evidently a gentleman by birth and education, and we are almost ashamed to allow him to take our horses. This, however, is one of the anomalies that meet the colonial observer at every turn, and it admits of easy explanation. The gentleman emigrant seldom comes out with any definite plan of action. He has no trade or business to which he can betake himself, as a matter of course, on his arrival; he has been accustomed rather to spend money than to earn it, and his expectations are more frequently based on a vague idea of getting on somehow or other, and a general confidence in his own abilities, than on sober, well weighed calculations. Ignorant of farming, disgusted with a solitary life, unfit for commerce, he fritters away his time and his means, and is soon a disappointed man. Too many give way under this pressure, and, falling into idleness, dissipation, and low company, become inevitably ruined. But with men of energetic character, it is often the turning point of their career. Ashamed to return home with a confession of failure, and seeing no alternative in the colony but labour or ruin, they throw pride and prejudice aside, and set to work manfully and in earnest. Little do mothers or sisters in England dream how their emigrant sons or brothers are employed, or what hardships they are undergoing, rather than disappoint the fond hopes which have been entertained on their behalf.

With such men as these, the wayside inn is a favourite resource. It requires no previous apprenticeship, and very little capital—is a social breathing kind of existence, and one in which the prospect of cash returns is not so distant or so problematical as in the majority of colonial pursuits.

But let us enter the hut. No room can be neater or more comfortable. The clean-swept floor, the yellow wood table, the beds ranged against the wall, a line of shelves and a cupboard. What more can the traveller require? Horns of various antelopes fastened to the posts that support the low flat roof, serve as pegs to hang coats and shot-belts; ablutions are generally performed in the open air.

If the reader pleases, we will move the table outside, and, while we enjoy a cup of tea and a pipe, amuse ourselves with watching the successive departures and arrivals, and getting a little insight into colonial manners.

A hard task has our landlord to accommodate himself to the tempers of his different guests: to humour the discontented, to please the exacting, to repress the insolent, and to keep the riotous in order; in short, to discharge all the duties of his occupation, without bringing himself down to its level. This requires the greater tact, since, from the confusion of classes, every one claims the title of gentleman, and expects to be treated accordingly, though the homely advice, to "behave as such," would not be inapplicable to the greater number.

I remember coming to a river in Canada just as the ferry-boat was starting, when a fellow, who was chopping wood by the side of the road, seeing me running, cried out, "Tell the *gentleman* at the boat to wait, there's a *man* coming." I was rather pleased than otherwise with the compliment, knowing that a gentleman is synonomous with an idle man, who is in America an object of universal contempt.

Unfortunately, in Natal the distinction is less aptly drawn, and labour has not yet attained its due pre-eminence. Boisterous familiarity and impudence, however, will carry off any amount of pretension, and require a rough check to put them down. Observe with what an off-handed air that spruce little man in the Newmarket coat, who has been chatting so glibly to us of the turf,—about which he knows less than he does of the counter,—accosts the plain-looking traveller who has just ridden up, and who does not appear particularly pleased with the rencontre:—

"How are you, my dear fellow?"

The traveller, who has never seen his dear friend but once, and then casually, draws himself up—"I was not aware, sir, that I had the pleasure of your acquaintance."

Little Man, nothing daunted.—"Oh, you remember, old fellow, I met you with my friends, P. and C.," &c.

Traveller.—"Well, then, P. and C. may encourage your familiarity, if they like; but I certainly shall not."

Little Man, firing up.—"Sir, I can tell you I am as good as you: my father was an officer."

Traveller.—"Was he really? indeed! I beg your pardon. *My* father was a sweep!"

Here comes a party of another stamp—a thriving merchant and his wife, with prancing steeds, new saddles, and feathers in the lady's riding-hat. Mark the supercilious tone of their address.

"Pray, can Mrs —— and myself obtain accommodation for the night?"

Landlord.—Certainly; if Mrs. —— will come into my house, my wife will do what she can to make her comfortable, and you can have a bed in the hut."

"That will never do; cannot we have the hut to ourselves?"

"Hardly; unless you will keep the door against all comers—half a dozen wagons may arrive to-night."

"Then you must tell them that the apartment is engaged."

"Thank you. I had rather not get up so often; but since you insist on the hut to the exclusion of all my other customers, some of whom will be offended and leave me, of course you will not object to pay a larger sum for its use?"

"Decidedly we should. Your charge, I believe, is eighteenpence, and I could not think of paying more."

"Then, I think, Mr. ——, you had better go on to the next house.

And after a little more to the same purpose, the consequential shopkeeper continues his ride, which is likely to be a dark one, for the evening is closing in, and the sky looks cloudy.

But by far the most exacting visitor is the newly-arrived emigrant. L—— told me of one of those who arrived at his place in the evening, and, on dismounting, walked naturally enough towards the house.

"This way, if you please," cried L——, pointing to the hut, "that is where my family live."

"So," said the stranger, "you keep that house for your own family, and this —— hut for your customers?"

"Exactly so; my wife and children live in that little house, and my guests here."

"Well," exclaimed the newly-arrived, as his eyes slowly wandered from clay floor to stick ceiling—"Well! I have travelled in India, in Australia, and America, and I never slept in a more wretched place than this."

This was rather too much. "So," said L——, "you have travelled in all those countries, and never slept in a worse place than this hut!"

"No, never," (emphatically).

"Then you shall have an opportunity of doing so to-night. Now go out and sleep in the *Veldt!*"

"And if a night under a thorn tree, in a drizzling rain," concluded L——, "did not teach him the value of a good bed in a Kafir hut, he must require a pretty severe lesson, and will have to buy his experience at a high price."

These are a few of the scenes to be met with at the wayside inn, to say nothing of drunken sprees, and the quarrels resulting from them, which are much the same in all countries, but more frequent and violent where the restraints of society are less binding.

These inns are only to be met with on the main roads. The traveller along by-paths must betake himself to the nearest farm-house, where shelter for the night will never be refused; though, if the owner be a Dutchman, the reception will probably be neither warm nor encouraging. Among their own people, the Boers exercise a rude and cumbrous hospitality, attended with a whole host of peculiar ceremonies, one of the most remarkable of which is the practice of firing off guns on the arrival or departure of their guests; but even these friendly visits are generally limited to a very short period, and the old Canadian rule is rarely infringed, "Not to stay till the rye loaf is laid on the table."

But to an Englishman hospitality is accorded solely as an unpleasant duty, from which there is no escape; and no pains are taken to conceal from him that he is anything but a welcome guest. Indeed, I have myself been frequently told as much, though not, I must confess, till after I had been regaled with a hearty supper, and had won the confidence of my entertainer, by listening to his catalogue of grievances, and taking in good part his tirades against the Government; indeed, for my own part, I have never had to complain of scant courtesy, and have always found the surly manner thaw after a few good-humoured answers, especially if I could throw in a joke, however poor the attempt. Once make a Dutchman laugh with you and he is won. There are several rules, however, which the traveller will do well to observe on his arrival at a Dutch farm, if he wishes to make a favourable impression on his host and, consequently, on all the Dutch in the colony. In the first place, he must never approach the house otherwise than at a slow and quiet pace. Secondly, when asking for hospitality, he must never dismount till it is granted, and the Boer tells him to "off-saddle." Thirdly, he must shake hands with the whole family, down to the urchin of four years old. He must not offer any remuneration, unless it be for forage for his horse, as it would be deemed an insult. He must start as early as possible next morning, and on no account prolong his stay beyond the time absolutely necessary for the rest of himself and his nag. He must never pass his entertainer again without shaking him by the hand; and, as a general rule, he must be very cautious lest in common conversation he may let a word drop which may be construed against the Dutch, singly or collectively,—for a bird of the air will carry it, and a hasty word may cost him many a night in the *Veldt*, and many a refusal of assistance when most he may need it. A friend of mine who was tempted, in the heat of argument, to use a sarcastic expression, with reference to the Boers, became from that moment a marked man among them; and a Yorkshire farmer, whose letter, containing an exaggerated picture of Dutch manners and customs, intended, probably for the amusement of his friends, was indiscreetly published in the papers, roused their indignation to such a pitch, that, had Africa been a land of bowie-knives, I would not have given much for his personal safety. The Dutch, indeed, are quite as susceptible on this point as the Yankees. "They must be cracked up, or they rile." But their bark is worse than their bite, and they have more of the milk of human kindness about them than their talk would lead a stranger to infer. A remarkable instance of this is said to have occurred at Boem Plaats. An officer of the Cape Corps, being wounded and unhorsed, was left to the mercy of the rebels, who were about to dispatch him, when he cried out, "*Moet ne schiet ne. Vrouw en kinder!*" Don't shoot—wife and children." They could not resist this appeal to their home sympathies, and actually lowered their pieces and suffered their enemy to escape. Such an incident occurring in the heat of a desperate skirmish, is rare in the annals of civilized warfare, and is highly honourable to a rude and uncultivated people, rankling under the sense of injury, whether real or supposed, and inflamed by the artful misrepresentations of a clever and unprincipled leader.

With regard to the cruelties of which they have been accused, in their dealings with the natives, they will appear, if judged by common sense, instead of the morbid sensibility which prevails in reference to this subject, to be no more than the natural results of all conflicts between the white man and the savage, in whatever country they may occur, and their conduct is mild and gentle when compared with that of our own colonists towards the native tribes of America. As masters, the Dutch are severe but rarely unjust; and it is notorious that they not only make better servants of their Kafirs, but retain them longer in their service, than Englishmen can do.

Much as I have said about African travelling, I have as yet alluded but casually to its chief incident, the crossing of flooded rivers, at all times attended with difficulty and delay, and occasionally with great danger. Ferries are now established along the line of road between Maritzburg and the mountains, and the only inconvenience incurred is that of unloading the wagon, and taking it to pieces. It is then conveyed across with perfect safety. The oxen are driven into the stream, and find their way over easily enough. Horses are made to swim by the side of the boats, one at a time, guided by a rein fastened round the neck, and held by one of the passengers. But where such means of transit do not exist, the passage is often a very hazardous affair, and seldom does a summer pass without its catalogue of mournful events from this cause. During my stay in the country, the Umgeni and Tugela were impassable for several weeks, and, among the fatal accidents, the colony was deprived of one of its most enterprising settlers, Mr. M'Neil. He was a bold and expert swimmer, and on reaching the bank of the flooded Umgeni, had tied his clothes in a bundle round his neck, and plunged without hesitation into the water. The current was strongest on the landing side, and whether he was too exhausted to stem it, or struck against some rock beneath the surface, or was pulled down by the weight of his bundle, it was impossible to conjecture, but he suddenly disappeared from the sight of his friends, who were anxiously watching him from the bank, and who were unable to render him the slightest assistance.

At the drift just above the Falls, a still more distressing accident took place. Lodge's son, a fine boy, of twelve years old, was ordered by his father to take a traveller's horse across the ford, which, though the water was very high, the old man still judged practicable. Twice did the boy urge the unwilling animal into the boiling stream, and twice returned to shore, finding it impossible for the horse to keep his footing. A third time, at his father's command, he ventured in, and had gained the middle of the ford, when the horse stumbled over a large rock in the bed of the river, and unable to recover himself, was swept into the rapids towards the fall. The poor boy clung to the stirrup with desperate energy, and, had he been able to retain his hold, might possibly have been saved, as the horse managed to gain the shore, but, striking against a stone, he was forced to relax his grasp, and in another moment was whirled over the edge of the cataract into the foaming pool beneath. The wretched parent rushed frantically along the bank uttering the most heart-rending cries, and was with difficulty prevented from throwing himself headlong into the chasm. When I saw him a few weeks afterwards, he was inclosing the solitary grave with a railing, and observed, in a tone of that peculiar selfishness which often characterizes the grief of such people, that he must do the work himself now, for his only help was gone.

I had occasion shortly after to cross this drift myself, when the water was unusually high, in a dark night; and a nervous undertaking I found it. I had crossed early the same morning in the boat, taking over my two horses; for I was going a long distance, and hoped to reach my destination before nightfall.

Old Schutkraal, however, who was the led horse, and who was always getting me into some scrape or other, took a fancy to the grass of a farm which we passed on the road, and positively refused to proceed further. I had foolishly neglected to tie the leading rein to the head-stall of the horse I was riding, and had fastened it instead to my own wrist; and the consequence was that the old horse, in starting aside with a sudden spring, jerked me fairly out of the saddle, and, as soon as I had disengaged my arm, started off, and led me a fine chace up and down precipices, and in and out of ravines, till I was so provoked and wearied as almost to sympathize with a man who, placed in a similar position, had lost all patience, and shot his horse dead on the spot. It was his only one, and he had to walk home eighteen miles, carrying the saddle,—which, I suppose, was no more than he deserved; I had often exclaimed against the cruelty of the action, and yet I am not quite sure that Schutkraal did not owe his safety as much to the fact of my being unarmed as to my regard for him; and I *had* a regard for the old horse, though a more stubborn self-willed animal never existed. When at length I did succeed in catching him, I found myself involved in a perfect labyrinth of dells, with but a faint guess at the direction in which the road lay. The sun, too, was setting, and a road here is never very discernible even in broad daylight, unless it be in the immediate neighbourhood of a town. In this dilemma, observing Schutkraal to hang on the rein as if he had a decided opinion about the matter, I resolved to abandon myself to his guidance. As soon as he found the rein loose, he started off at a brisk pace, and it was not long before the roar of the cataract informed me that we were returning to the Umgeni. We soon reached the bank of the river, which had evidently risen still higher since the morning, and was rushing impetuously on to its leap of three hundred feet, as the high-bred courser springs forward when the opposing barrier is in sight. On the other side I could see the lights in Lodge's cottage, but could not hope that my shout would be heard amid the roar of the waters. It was clear that I must either tempt the stream, or pass the night on the bank; for, with a house of public entertainment in sight, I had not the face to ask shelter at one of the neighbouring farms. My mind was now made up. Having knee-haltered and turned loose the young horse I had been riding, which I did not think quite equal to the attempt, I mounted Schutkraal, threw the stirrups over the saddle, lest they should entangle his feet, and, trusting partly to his sagacity and partly to my own knowledge of the ford, rode boldly into the stream.

At the third step the water flowed above my knees with a force that made Schutkraal reel. At one moment he mounted upon a rock which rose almost to the surface; the next he was out of his depth, and struggling with the current. A desperate plunge, and he has regained his feet, and holds on bravely, while I encourage him with hand and voice. A stumble were destruction,—but the shallow water is gained now, and the old horse deliberately stoops down and takes a long refreshing draught. Then, pricking his ears, he springs up the steep bank, breaks into a voluntary canter, and in another minute stops at Lodge's door.

I knew a colonist who, when he came to a deep river, always rode his horse into the stream, and then, slipping over his back, swam behind, holding on by the tail,—thus serving as a rudder to steer his horse, while he relieved him of his weight, and also supporting himself against the violence of the current. If this sounds like a joke, I can assure the reader that it is gravely meant, and that, having tried the plan myself, I can honestly recommend it. To a nervous person, it has this great advantage, that it deprives him of the power of clutching at the bridle, which he would otherwise infallibly do when his horse is swimming, and which is the readiest method of drowning him. "When he feels the bottom," said the same adviser to me, "hold him up with hand and heel; but the moment he is out of his depth, let him have his head quite free, or he is gone."

To the Kafir these swollen rivers are no obstacle. He takes to the water like a Newfoundland dog, whose manner of swimming he closely follows; and it is a strong current that stops him on his way. But white men are not all quite as amphibious; and a few bridges would be a great boon to the colony, whenever the money can be found for their erection. One was talked of across the Umgeni before I left, and, I dare say, has ere now been completed.

About ten miles beyond the Umgeni Falls, there is a cataract, on one of its tributary streams, which, though less known, equals it in height, and far surpasses it in beauty.

Having stood upon Table Rock, and gazed upon that wonder of wonders, Niagara, till an idea of its immensity grew upon the mind, swallowing up all other thoughts, and leaving nothing but a painful sensation of helplessness and feebleness, such as one might expect to feel in the presence of a superior being, I suppose I ought, in strict propriety, to speak of an African waterfall with something very like contempt. I know many a fisherman who, after having felt a sixteen pound salmon at the end of his line, laughs at the light single-handed rod with which his friend loves to beguile the lively, but less ponderous trout, and calls it a child's toy. I confess, that to me this habit of viewing everything comparatively has ever appeared most absurd, tending as it does to circumscribe within such narrow limits one's enjoyment of varied traits or diversion. Having killed many a salmon, I can thoroughly enjoy a day among the gudgeon;—and having seen Niagara, I could still find much to admire in the Kaarkloof Falls.

Let the reader imagine himself walking along the bank of a little *spruit* such as I have already more than once described, and let it be in summer, that the grass may be high and green; suddenly he finds himself, without any previous warning (unless a dull roar, appearing to come from the bowels of the earth, shall have awakened his curiosity) on the dizzy edge of a rocky precipice, over which the tiny stream is poured, to be lost instantly in a dense mass of foliage that clothes it from top to bottom. Peering down through the interlacing boughs, he sees a silver thread winding along the centre of the ravine; and, turning half round, the Falls are full before him. Up to the very edge of the spray come the trees, giving by the contrast of their deep dark green a richer and purer robe of white to the column of glassy water, and a brighter hue to the gems of light that sparkle on its snowy side, like diamonds on a train of silver tissue. Hundreds of baboons sport in fantastic gambols around the pool beneath, which looks neither deep nor dark, for the rays of the noonday-sun strike up the middle of the ravine, and illumine its profoundest depths. The scaly liguana glides within its waters, or lies basking his whole length (some four or five feet) on a fragment of rock by its side, ready to dart in at the slightest alarm. High among the topmost twigs that fringe the edge of the ravine, flit the tiny sugar-birds, with their gay and streamy plumage, but far below, in the recesses of the impenetrable bush, dwells the savage leopard, and the not less dreaded buffalo, whose haunts few would care to disturb. Above the chief Falls are two minor Falls, both of great beauty; and higher still, you may see the river flowing gently through a wide plain, which offers a more extended surface for cultivation than is usually met with in Natal.

Here Mr. Methley, the author of a little work on Natal, written in rather too enthusiastic a spirit, owns a large farm, and here, on a rising ground above the stream, he has built what may be called, *par excellence*, the country-seat of Natal. Indeed, it is the only building, out of Maritzberg or D'Urban, which pretends to be more than a cottage, and it must have cost a considerable sum. The chief room is a large handsome library, with carved panels to the doors and stained glass in the windows, that give it quite an old-fashioned English appearance. There is a handsome verandah, opening on a terrace, or rather a succession of terraces, communicating with one another by steps, where the garden is to be laid out; but when I was there, though the house was complete, and large stables were in process of erection, there was no sign of plough or spade, beyond a little plot of unfenced ground with a crop of pease. In a Canadian clearing, on the contrary, a barn would be the first building put up, and it is often filled up more than once before the settler thinks of anything beyond his log-hut for his own habitation. In this case, however, the plan is likely enough to answer, as Mr. Methley has managed to attract some of the best and most hard-working emigrants to his neighbourhood, and has sold or let them portions of his land, which they are turning to good account. One of them, a gentleman from Devonshire, regaled me with a bowl of genuine clouted cream, such as I have never seen equalled but in one dear home on the banks of the Dart.—We shall never taste it there again!

Mr. Methley's house was advertised for sale; and, should it find a good purchaser, is likely to be the centre of a very pleasant circle of society,—for some of the nicest families of the colony are to be found between the Umgeni and Kaar-kloof.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FARM ON THE UMLAS — CRACKING ALMONDS — A NIGHT AMONG THE GOOSEBERRIES—KLIP SPRUIT FARM—THE GARDEN—THE DAIRY—KAFIR MILKING—PIGS—MASTERS AND MEN—FARM OCCUPATIONS—BAKING—HEDGEROWS—WILL IT PAY—LAND CLEARED AND UNCLEARED—COMBINATION OF AGRICULTURE AND STOCK KEEPING NECESSARY—CONVICT LABOUR—KAFIR LABOUR—TROPICAL PRODUCTIONS—COTTON—INDIGO—TOBACCO, &c.

" *Upi inhlela na Klip Spruit, groot Englishmans Plaas ?*" (which is the way to Rocky Brook, the big Englishman's farm ?) This barbarous jargon of mixed Dutch and Kafir was addressed to a solitary native whom I met at the foot of the Umlas, about fifteen miles south-east of Maritzburg, with his bundle of knob-sticks and assegais in his hand, and a calabash hanging over his shoulder. I had accepted an invitation from a friend to spend a week or two on his farm, the more gladly as I was anxious to exchange the close and sultry air of the town for a keener and less enervating atmosphere, and was also very desirous to see something more of a settler's life in Natal than I had hitherto had an opportunity of doing. I was now, as far as I could guess, about half way on my journey thither, but this part of the country was new to me, and I did not feel very sure that I was on the right track. Nor did my sable friend's answer tend much to enlighten me on this important subject. At first his only reply was, " *Mina ai aze*" (I don't know), the Kafirs ordinary response to the white man; but a small present of tobacco having cleared his idea, he pointed out the direction with his hand, and said something about " *umcumcum*" (the reader need not try to pronounce the word, for the *c* is a click). By this I was reassured, as I knew that " *umcumcum*" meant the Cape gooseberry, and had been informed that I was to turn off the road on arriving at a small thicket of this shrub. Meanwhile it was high time to off-saddle, and having prevailed on the Kafir to go and fetch me a bowl of *amaas* from a neighbouring kraal, I turned towards a ruined building which stood on the bank of the stream, and marked the site of the deserted farm. Dismounting under the shade of some splendid seringas that ornamented the *stoep*, I strolled into the neglected garden. It had evidently been once well stocked and tended, and must have richly repaid its cultivator.

Vines were straggling along the ground in wild luxuriance; the peach-trees were still laden with fruit, though the relics on the ground showed that they had furnished many a feast to the native, or passing traveller; and underneath an almond tree, covered with ripe almonds, I found two stones, one with its surface slightly hollowed for the reception of the nut, and another to serve as a hammer, placed there as if on purpose for the accommodation of the hungry wayfarer. The garden fence on one side was of the fig-tree, whose fruit, in my opinion, is the wholesomest and best in Africa; and on the other a magnificent hedge of pomegranate, at least eight feet high, with its ruddy apples nestling amid the bright green leaves, and looking all the more tempting from the contrast.

With these, and a draught of sour milk, I made a capital luncheon, and after filling my pockets with almonds, saddled up, and proceeded on my journey.

I should not omit to mention for those who wish to know the price of improved land in Natal, that this farm was for sale, and I believe £1000 had been asked for it. At the average price of two shillings per acre, for which land may generally be purchased from private individuals, this would allow £400 for the improvements—considerably above their value; for the premises would require rebuilding, and the ploughed ground, overrun with weeds, would be more troublesome to bring into cultivation than virgin soil. But in the mania for land speculation that lately existed, the sum was not an excessive one, and the beauty of the situation and near neighbourhood of the river, might almost warrant the owner in putting a fancy price upon it.

The sun had set ere I reached the gooseberry bushes, and after one or two ineffectual attempts to discover the Kafir path by which

I was to turn off, I resolved rather to spend the night where I was, than to wander on at the risk of losing myself entirely. Here was at once a supper, and a more sheltered couch than is usually to be found on the *Veldt*, and the night wind is sometimes raw and chilly, even in midsummer. So I took off bridle and saddle, knee-haltered my horse, and having seen him take his usual roll, as a proof that he was not the worse for his day's fatigue, fell to picking gooseberries. I am sorry that I cannot give the botanical name of this pleasant fruit. It is inclosed in a leafy envelope, which becomes yellow and withered as it ripens; it is of a bright golden colour, and has a slightly smoky taste. There are no thorns on the stem; in short, it is as unlike a gooseberry as possible. Having picked my hat full, I lay down in the thickest part of the bush, not without some apprehensions on the score of snakes, for whose habitation the place seemed peculiarly adapted, and with the help of my saddle, made myself tolerably comfortable for the night. The almonds helped to eke out my supper, the never-failing desert followed; and then such a refreshing sleep as I never manage to get now, since I have taken to scribbling and feather-beds.

The next morning I discovered the path, not many yards from my sleeping-place; and following its narrow windings through rank grass that reached to my horse's shoulder, in about an hour I arrived at my destination, when I did ample justice to the substantial breakfast that awaited me.

I shall devote the rest of this chapter to a sketch of the farm, and of our daily occupations upon it, from which the reader will be able to form some notion of the nature of agricultural pursuits in Natal, as well as of the habits and manner of life of those who are engaged in them.

The farm contained 500 acres of as good soil as is to be found in any part of the colony. Distant from the sea about fifteen miles, it united the almost tropical climate of the coast, with the healthier and purer air of the inland country, and, while it possessed in an eminent degree the agricultural qualities of the former, was entirely free from those evils, which render the lower part of Natal so fatal to stock of all kinds. Ticks were unknown, and even when brought up by the oxen from the Bay, soon disappeared, leaving the hide to become smooth and glossy as that of a thorough-bred Durham. A remarkable instance of this came under my notice. A span of eight oxen, which had been taken down to the bush country beyond the mouth of the Umgeni, on an elephant-hunting expedition, returned to the farm in most deplorable condition, almost devoured by ticks, faint and feeble, and reduced to perfect skeletons. One of the number had died on the road, and two more, injured beyond recovery, dropped down suddenly and expired within a few days of their arrival; but the remainder rapidly recovered flesh, and after a fortnight's run were hardly distinguishable by their condition from the rest of the herd.

The homestead was prettily situated on a slope, surrounded on three sides by the Umquahumbe, a perennial tributary of the River Illovo. As yet, it consisted but of three Kafir huts, a cook-house, a kitchen built of sods, a shed for the calves, made of poles and reeds, a fine square cattle-kraal, strongly fenced with posts and rails, and the gallows, which I have already mentioned as forming a conspicuous but not very ornamental object on every farm. A bank and ditch separated the kraal from the ploughed ground, which, to the extent of seven or eight acres, was almost entirely occupied by mealies—some just bursting above the ground, some half-grown, and others quite ripe, and so high that the horseman, as he rode up the path that led through them to the hut, was lost to sight as if in a forest. Above, on the crown of the hill, was the wooden framework of a wattle-and-dab-house, fifty feet by eighteen. The poles, mostly of white iron-wood, were all brought from a *kloof* on the farm. In front of the house was the garden, containing about an acre of ground, and inclosed by a bank and ditch. It could be put under water at pleasure, and, indeed, nothing more was needed than a water-course a quarter of a mile in length to irrigate the whole hill-side. But the mealies do not appear to require it. The garden had been too lately commenced to make much shew. A crop of oats had been taken off it, and they were now ploughing for English potatoes. Green peas were seldom wanting at our table, and pumpkins and melons grew in profusion. Cuttings of various fruit-trees, brought from the deserted farm on the Umlas, had been stuck in here and there, and were flourishing without exception.

There were about forty head of cattle, including a span of twelve trek oxen of the large Fatherland breed, which, though highly prized, are surpassed, for all working purposes, by the light and hardy zulus.

The dairy was a sad failure, as it is wherever the cows are left to the management of Kafirs. Calves are seldom weaned in Natal till they are at least a year old, and it is no uncommon sight to see a cow giving suck to an animal quite as large as herself. The milking process is quite a savage affair. The cow is hunted up into a corner of the kraal, and made fast by the horns to one of the posts, as if for slaughter; her hind legs are then tied together, that the operation may be rendered as disagreeable as possible; the calf is next permitted to take a draught, when he is pulled aside, and the remainder of the milk is yielded per force into the pail. It is the business of the Kafir to prevent the calves from anticipating this hasty meal by a fuller and more leisurely one, which they will assuredly do, if they can get the opportunity; and, when the cattle are let out in the morning to pasture, the calves are always driven in an opposite direction to that which is taken by the rest of the herd; but, notwithstanding this precaution, it is a frequent complaint that they have taken all the milk, and that there is none for tea. Nor is this the only inconvenience that results from intrusting the matter to Kafir management. A cow that has been accustomed to native milking will seldom allow a white man to touch her; still less will she yield her milk to his manipulations; so that, if, as frequently happens, the Kafirs should take it into their heads to leave the farm, the whole business of the dairy is at a stand-still.

Pigs are not often found on a Natal farm; there is no inclosed yard, and the difficulty of keeping them out of mischief is so great as to counterbalance, in the opinion of most settlers, their many advantages. Besides which, there is little vegetable refuse, and a more profitable use can be made of mealies and potatoes than pork-feeding.

I confess, I should not be inclined to give up bacon so readily; but my host assured me that he had made the experiment, and was glad to bring it to an end by the aid of his gun; as to any more butcher-like method of terminating their existence, it was out of the question—the pigs being perfectly conscious of their delinquencies, and keeping aloof, on the principle of "no catchee no havee."

At meal times, in the principal Kafir hut, we mustered a strong party. There were two white servants: a rough hard-working labourer from the midland counties, and an experienced wagon-driver from the old colony. My host and his partner (for the farm was a joint concern), with a young lad who had come to acquire a practical knowledge of colonial farming, completed the regular group, which was now augmented by several guests; and on one occasion no less than four sons of English clergymen were gathered round the yellow wood table.

To save time and trouble—for, as there were no women in the establishment, the cooking devolved on one of the labourers, and interrupted his more important occupations—masters and men dined at the same board, and a round game of cards often concluded the evening, at which gun-wads were the harmless substitute for counters or coin. Sometimes we were entertained with music by young H——, who played remarkably well on the accordion, and had an inexhaustible fund of melodies and variations, from the Overture of "Semiramide" to "Jack Robinson." There were two capital iron beds in the hut, and those who could not find room in them were content with mattresses on the floor, or climbed up to roost in hammocks suspended from the ceiling, by no means the worst berth on a hot night. At sunrise we sallied forth, without much previous toilet, to the brook, about a hundred yards from the door, where a deep pool made a splendid bathing-place, and, after a refreshing plunge, set about our daily labours. The wagoner is busy making a new tent for the cart; the labourer is ploughing up new land with a team of eight or ten oxen—and it is hard work even then. It must be a strong machine that stands long against the frequent jars which a Natal plough has to encounter; and I am not sure that the Dutch one-handled affair, unwieldy and cumbrous though it be, is not better for breaking up new land than Ransom's most perfect instruments. Our host is putting a new rail in the gate of the kraal; the cattle having forced it open last night, and found their way into the standing corn. One of the Kafirs is hard at work hoeing young mealies; while two more of our party are picking the ripe cobs, stripping back their leafy covering, and hanging them in pairs across the sticks to keep till they are taken to market. They will keep better so than if the grains were separated from their cells—a long and tedious process.

So little are the seasons yet understood, that seed-time and harvest are often coincident; and the general idea seems to be, with few exceptions, that, put seeds into the ground when you will, they are sure to come up,—but the variety of success attending the introduction of European plants and grains affords a plain proof that the observance of stated periods for the different processes of cultivation is of importance here no less than in our northern clime. It remains for experience to define their limits, and to establish something like a regular system of Natal agriculture.

One Kafir has driven off the cattle to pasture, while another is gone to the *vlei* to cut *tambookie* grass for the thatch of the new house. S—— and I have each taken a scythe, and are working away at the endless hay-field that surrounds us; partly with a view of securing some good fodder for the horses through the winter months, and partly to obviate the necessity of burning close round the homestead, and to keep the fires, which will be spreading in all directions in February and March, from approaching too near the crops. Besides, I have little doubt that constant mowing would tend to sweeten the grass, to check its rank growth, and improve its quality as pasture.

H—— has brought up some pine-apple crowns from the Bay, and is digging up the ground in the most sunny spot he can find to plant them. A Kafir is making holes for the posts of a small fence. The way in which he handles the spade is remarkable. He grasps the handle with both hands, holding it at arms length, with the face of the spade turned towards him, and sticking it into the ground with the swing of his arms. He never presses it with his foot, or uses the handle as a lever to shovel out the loose earth, but all is done with a jerk; and yet it is astonishing how quickly he works through the hard soil.

A portion of the morning must be devoted to baking; and as we are all first-rate hands, at least in our opinion, we take turns at this necessary occupation. How the first lump of dough was raised on the farm is a mystery; but that once accomplished, there is no further difficulty, a handful of yesterday's dough making leaven for to-day, and serving all the purpose of a separate preparation of yeast. It is baked in an iron pot among the wood ashes, just as the kettle loaf is done in Devonshire, and turns out as good bread as ever was tasted; but there is no satisfaction to the colonist in eating imported flour, and were I on a farm of my own, I would forego the luxury of wheaten bread till I could raise it myself. It is still a question whether wheat will succeed in Natal, but it will never be solved while farmers are content to grow mealies for sale, and buy the more expensive grain for their own consumption.

I have already spoken of the inconvenience arising from the absence of fences in Africa, as well as of the naked appearance which the farms consequently present. Our young maize was nearly devoured by riet-boks, and during my stay there was a constant cry of "Schutkraal is among the pumpkins," and a general rush towards the garden—upon which the old horse would hop over the low bank, and canter off to a safe distance, whence he would return to renew his depredations as soon as we were out of sight.

These banks are quite an insufficient protection, unless the ditch be very deep and wide, and the labour of constructing them is immense. There is no reason why every crop should not be surrounded by a hedge-row as thick and impassable as a brick wall. The materials are at hand in every part of the country—the prickly cactus, the mimosa, with its hooked thorns, from which the tree has received the name of "Wait a bit," the Kafir broom, a light underwood, which grows like a weed—all of them, and many more, might, with little trouble, be made to serve as inclosures to fields of large size, while the pomegranate and quince, from their thick growth, would be well suited for fencing small courts and gardens.

Nor is it only as a protection against marauding antelopes that I make the suggestion. Even were no more solid advantage to be gained, the emigrant farmer will not regret the labour spent in thus giving to his *erf* an air of comfort and neatness, a home appearance which will go far to compensate for all other deficiencies. There is more depending on such simple matters than might at first be supposed. Order, arrangement, and method, are lost in the confusion of garden, field, and premises. Slovenly and careless habits are insensibly engendered through the eye upon the mind; and it is to these that we may trace the shambling, irregular style of living too common on African farms.

To the Africander, accustomed to the open scenery of his country, when the sight is limited but by some distant rand or mountain, and where a home view is seldom to be met with, this may appear almost incomprehensible; but the Englishman, with the recollection of farm-yard and close, orchard and paddock, and all the details of an English homestead fresh in his mind, will feel the force of my remark, and acknowledge that if these advantages are to be obtained, they are well worth the trouble of planting a few roods of cuttings, which require little more than sticking into the ground to ensure their growth. For my own part, I much fear that the sight of a hedge-row would go far in deciding me on the purchase of a farm. I can even now remember the delight I experienced when, after a tour among the prairies of America, whose characteristic beauty no African plain can rival, I first saw the neat hedges and green fields on the Cheshire bank of the Mersey.

To those who can sympathize in the delight of returning after a long exile, I need not apologize for inserting the following lines, which recurred to me at the moment:—

"The hedgerows of old England!
I see them once again,
In many crossing lines of green,
Spread o'er the distant plain.

I 've been where trackless forests lie—
Across the ocean's foam—
And the hedgerow is a welcome sight,
For it speaks to me of home.

"Along the sunny upland,
Across the sheltered vale,
Where the willows hear the streamlet tell
Its gently murmured tale:
Around the grassy meadow,
And the wavy field of corn,
And the wood whose lengthened shadow
Comes between me and the morn.

"Along the dusty highway,
By the weary traveller's side,
And round the cottage garden,
The peasant's care and pride—
Now in a graceful circle,
And now in formal square,
And now a zig-zag course that breaks
In patterns quaint and rare.

"And now in russet brown arrayed,
And now in gayest green,
And now in white that glimmers bright—
The hoar-frost's robe of sheen.
Still in each dress the seasons bring
New beauties shall appear,
And the hedgerow be a grateful sight
Through all the livelong year."

But while I am dwelling on the ornamental part, the reader may be longing to ask the plain question, "Does all this pay? Is the pursuit of agriculture likely to prove a lucrative speculation to the capitalist, or to afford a living to the laborious emigrants, so many of whom have left our shores within the last two years to embark in it?"

I will answer first in the words of a Dutch gentleman,—a twelve years' resident in Natal,—whose opinion is at all events disinterested, and whose well-known talents and enterprize give weight to his judgment. Of course, he takes matters as they have hitherto been, without making allowance for the improvements which may be introduced, or the discoveries which may be made, for the opening of fresh resources, or fresh markets, or any other effects of an extensive emigration from England. "Agricultural farming by itself," said he, "will not pay in any part of Africa; and if by stock-breeding a man can live and bring up a family comfortably, it is as much as he can expect. No African farmer can afford to pay high wages, *i. e.*, to employ white men as labourers, and native labour, since the abolition of slaves, is so uncertain, and so little to be relied upon, that it can scarcely be taken into consideration at all." Now, this verdict, although it must be received *cum grano*, still contains sufficient truth to form a fair starting-point for our inquiries.

It has been the fashion with those who have promoted emigration to Natal, to insist much in their guide-books and prospectuses, on the fact that, throughout the greater part of the country, no clearing is required to ,prepare the soil for the seed, but that the settler, on arriving at his location, can at once commence ploughing without any of the previous labour or expense which he must incur in an American forest. All counterbalancing difficulties are passed over in silence, and the reader is left to infer that in other respects there is at least an equality of advantages, and that the Natal emigrant is, at first starting, so much in advance of his Canadian brother. If the soil of Natal were a rich mass of soft vegetable mould, so easily worked as to need no other preparation than that of a light harrow for the reception of the first seed; if its natural qualities were such as to enable it to bear the same crop year after year without artificial aid; if, in short, it resembled an Illinois prairie, the comparison would then indeed be altogether in its favour. But since, on the contrary, its surface, when not composed of sand, is so completely baked as to offer a strong resistance to plough or spade, since, at least, it is but of an average degree of fertility, by no means independent of manure, still less of irrigation, for which moreover the facilities are frequently wanting, the fact of its being, as some of the advertisements triumphantly affirm, "for miles uncovered by a bush," is not after all so great a matter of congratulation; and I shrewdly suspect, that if accounts were compared after the first harvest, the crop taken from among the stumps of a Canadian forest, would go farther towards defraying the expenses of clearing than the produce of the unencumbered ground of Natal towards repaying the necessary outlay of ploughing, digging a water course &c.

I have said quite enough to prove that unless in peculiarly favoured situations, or in the immediate neighbourhood of a town, a system of small allotments, such as twenty, fifty, or even a hundred acres, is a manifest absurdity, and therefore that for labourers without capital Natal does not offer an advantageous prospect. Agriculture must be combined with stock farming, not only for the sake of the manure, but also for the simple reason that it cannot support itself alone. Six thousand acres of land have hitherto been considered necessary to support an undertaking of this double character. But we will suppose that one thousand might be sufficient, and that on every estate of that size twenty acres of irrigable land might be found, which is rather above than below the mark, still a capital of at least £400 would be required for commencing operations with any hope of success. With this sum in his pocket, and a well-selected lot, (for it is not every farm in Natal that is high and healthy enough for cattle), the steady, industrious settler who devotes his time entirely to his business, goes rarely to the town, and can do a fair day's work himself, will run little risk of failure, though not to him, nor even to a larger capitalist, can I hold out the hope of making anything like a fortune by these pursuits.

And this brings us to the second part of my Dutch friend's complaint which is no new one in Africa. For many years the Cape has been imploring from the mother country a large importation of labourers sufficient to bring down wages to such a price as the farmer could afford to pay, though when her request was answered by the offer of convict labour, which had already raised a younger colony to a height of prosperity far above her own, she not only rejected the boon, but treated its very proposal as a matter of serious offence. The grounds of the refusal were plausible enough at first sight, and particularly fitted to catch the popular ear, but quite untenable when calmly weighed against the solid advantages which experience has proved the scheme to possess. No better plan could be devised to encourage the development of the resources of a new country than the ticket-of-leave system, combining as it does the gift of cheap and efficient labour for the settler, with the best chance of reformation for the convict, who is at once restrained by the fear of punishment following immediately on the slightest offence, and stimulated to perseverance in well-doing, by the hope of restoration to his forfeited privileges. Had such an arrangement been established in Africa, its effects would ere this have been visible in the fresh impulse which it would give to the industry and activity of the population, and in a corresponding increase in the value of property. As to the dread of moral taint, I believe it to have less foundation than is generally supposed; at all events, such scruples, which may well befit an independent and self-supporting colony, do not come with so good a grace from one which has never ceased to be a heavy burthen to the mother country, while the returns of its commerce have been far from bearing an adequate proportion to the benefits received. Western Australia, acting on other and wiser calculations, has gladly accepted the assistance so lightly esteemed by the Cape colonists, and has already so far emerged from the state of prostration in which she had been sunk, as to encourage the most sanguine hopes of her ultimate prosperity. The mere amount of expenditure contingent on a local convict establishment is an advantage not to be despised by a rising colony; though this is but a secondary consideration in comparison with the profit resulting from such a measure to the cultivator in the interior.

In Natal, it was supposed that the native population would afford the means of dispensing with extraneous aid, and this circumstance has been held out as an additional temptation to the emigrating capitalist. Whether continuous and steady labour can ever be obtained from the Kafirs, and by what means, is yet a problem. It certainly is not to be had under the present system. As long as he chooses to work he is a good herdsman, invaluable as a messenger across the *Veldt* and, though far inferior to the white man in energy, perseverance, and bodily strength, yet capable of being made skilful and hardy in almost any light work. Five shillings a month are all the wages he requires, and his keep scarcely costs as much again; but he will seldom engage for a longer period, and often takes his departure before the time has elapsed, sacrificing even his wages, of which he fully knows the value, to the whim or fancy of the moment. Impatient of control, a sharp word will sometimes be sufficient to drive him away, and his place is not easily supplied. It matters not to him how important his services may be to the luckless farmer, whether cotton be bursting in the pod, or mealies dropping from the stalk; whether cows need their milker, or a span of oxen their leader, he is off at once to his kraal, and neither entreaties nor threats can avail to detain him. The latter might perhaps be of some use, but that the cunning fellow is perfectly aware that he is effectually protected against the anger of his master, who, on the other hand, cannot have him punished for his breach of contract, without more trouble and loss of time than he is likely to incur for the purpose. In short, as long as the savage has a choice in the matter, he will prefer idleness to work, his wandering habits to a more settled existence, and the enjoyment of his own notions of liberty to a state of restraint and servitude. At present he has no incentive to labour, beyond that of providing himself with the means of purchasing a wife. His own wants are few and easily satisfied, and he is in fact richer and more independent than his employer. The application of some more stringent measure than has yet been adopted is necessary to compel him to work with anything like regularity, and to ensure to the farmer the benefit he has been taught to expect from a neighbourhood which, on other considerations, he would be far from desiring.

But it is not to such agriculture as I have described, nor to pastoral farming, that Natal must look for the chief sources of her prosperity. Even if the labour-difficulty were removed, these pursuits will never support a dense population, or do more than enrich a few large proprietors. They will be useful as supplementary aids, but should not form the chief objects of attraction. Neither corn, nor wool, nor hides, nor tallow, nor horses, will bring wealth to the colony, or tend to raise it above a humble mediocrity. She cannot hope to compete with Australia and America in any of these, and if she succeed in producing such a supply of them as to render her own inhabitants independent of imposts, it is as much as can reasonably be expected. She has other resources, however, which, if fully improved, would soon place her on a level with the most flourishing of southern countries.

Along the whole line of the coast, and extending inland from ten to fifteen miles, is a belt of land covered for the most part with thick underwood, occasionally interspersed with fine timber. The soil is chiefly a light sand, becoming redder and stiffer as it recedes from the sea. The climate, though less healthy than in any other part of Natal, is not positively unhealthy, except for horses and cattle; to these it frequently proves fatal. The boa hides his lengthened coil in the matted woods, while the alligator lurks in the sandy beds of the wide shallow rivers. Here, if anywhere, are the head-quarters of the insect tribe, so much dreaded by the European. Of the tick the reader has already heard enough.

This is not a promising sketch, and yet it is in this district that the capitalist who looks for large returns must invest his money; it is here only that the labourer with twenty acres of land can hope to earn a livelihood. Here those valuable tropical productions which form so great an item in the commerce of England may be raised with little less than certainty. Cotton, indigo, tobacco, and the castor-oil plant, are indigenous and grow luxuriantly, while experience has shown that coffee may be cultivated with perfect success.

Among these cotton claims the first notice, as being the most valuable and the most easily produced. It is a received fact, not only that it can be raised to any extent in Natal, but that the climate is as well adapted to its growth as even that of Georgia. The samples which have been sent to Manchester have been pronounced to be beautiful in quality, uniform in staple, remarkably clean and white, peculiarly suitable for the manufactures of Lancashire, and so superior that any quantity which might be exported would find a ready market. The plant, which elsewhere is an annual, is here perennial, and ripens throughout the year, though the chief harvest is from January to the end of March. Several companies have been already formed for the cultivation of this plant on a large scale, and if they have not succeeded so well as might have been anticipated, it has been rather owing to the incompleteness of their own arrangements than to any disappointment in the crop. The difficulty which the grower on a small scale has to ençounter is the want of a purchaser on the spot, his capital not enabling him to ship on his own account. To obviate the inconvenience arising from the precarious supply of labour, the introduction of Coolies from India has been suggested, and as the experiment is about to be tried by a gentleman who has invested a large sum in cotton farming, we shall have an opportunity of testing its success.

Many varieties of indigo grow wild in the colony, and there is not the slightest doubt that it will prove a valuable article of commerce; but the heavy expense attending the manufacture has hitherto been a bar to any extensive speculation in this drug.

The culture of tobacco may be particularly recommended to the attention of the cottager, as it involves no expensive or heavy labour, and his wife and children may assist him in cutting and drying the leaves. A small plot of ground is sufficient to produce a large quantity. Two crops may be grown in the year, and he need not go far for a market in a colony which imports annually thousands of pounds weight from America. The native weed grown by the Kafir I can warrant of excellent flavour, but for those who are more fastidious, the seed from Virginia and Havannah has been introduced, and thrives equally with the indigenous plant.

I might enumerate many other natural productions, all of more or less importance, which are to be found in abundance in this region, and which might be turned to profitable account by the aid of science and industry. It were easy also to enlarge on the details of their cultivation, and to show by figures that the necessary outlay could not fail to be remunerative; but I should only be trenching on the province of the guide-books, and wearying the reader who may already be yawning over this uninteresting chapter. Those who may desire to obtain more practical information, I would refer to Mr. Christopher's useful work on Natal, which contains many interesting particulars; though his observations, like those of other authors on similar subjects, have been taken through a highly-coloured medium. One fact, however, cannot be too much insisted upon, or too strongly enforced on the notice of the public, namely, that Natal undoubtedly possesses the means not only of producing a staple article of export sufficient to ensure her own ultimate prosperity, but of furnishing the mother country with the material of her most important manufacture, and that in such profusion as to render her independent of those contingencies which, however remote, must always render the supply of a foreign market uncertain and precarious. With these advantages in her favour no difficulties can long continue to impede the progress of Natal. Corn may fail, cattle may die, Dutchmen may grumble and Kafirs refuse to work, but, if the assurance of a profitable investment should once succeed in attracting English capital to her shores, she will form no exception to the invariable success which attends its well-directed employment.

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CHAPTER XII.

CAUSES OF THE KAFIR WAR—PSEUDO PHILANTHROPY—KAT RIVER HOTTENTOTS — EXTINCTION OF COLOURED RACES — HOW TO DEAL WITH THE KAFIR—A CLEAR BORDER—NO CONCESSION.

It is not alone to the mystical view of the seer that the shadows of coming events are disclosed. Though the depths of futurity lie shrouded in impenetrable darkness, we can yet see far down the gloomy path,—far enough to shape our course with safety,—if we make the best use of what light we have, and keep a good look out a-head. The mirror of the past, if we have scanned it well, and turned it aright, will throw its rays in advance of our steps; we may read in the countenance of the Present, if we will but study, the features of its unborn offspring to-morrow clearly pourtrayed; and if the lamp within be kept burning, and not suffered to wax dim by carelessness or neglect, we may push on boldly, yet cautiously, trusting always in a merciful and over-ruling Providence, yet not so as to let go the helm altogether, or to set at naught the rules which reason and experience suggest for our guidance in the dangerous journey.

Few, perhaps none, of those occurences which are called unexpected, whether they have been for good or for evil, whether they have come upon nations or individuals, have come without warning. There have been signs in earth, in air, on the wide sea, in the spirits or actions of men, in the times,—though none regarded them; the finger has been on the wall, though none read the writing; and yet those who run may read. While yet the sky is clear and cloudless, and the bosom of ocean calm and unruffled as an inland lake, and thought of danger is furthest from the mind of the heedless passenger, the watchful eye of the captain sees the coming squall. A low sough of wind in a particular quarter, a ripple on the sea that has no business to be there, an overloaded, oppressive feeling in the atmosphere, nay, the very deadness of the lull that prevails around; these are signs—*φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσιν·*—that speak clearly enough to him, and the energy with which he calls all hands to shorten sail, shows that he has read them to some purpose.

The outbreak of the disastrous Kafir war, now raging in South Africa, was no exception to this universal law, by which the cause precedes the effect, and the one may be anticipated in the other as surely as the coming of night is foretold by the setting sun, or the approach of dawn by the first gleam in the eastern sky. Long before the storm burst forth, those who carefully examined the political horizon, and were best acquainted with its phenomena, knew that it was inevitable. They knew that a vacillating policy had destroyed in the breast of the savage our only safeguard against his overwhelming numbers—the dread of the white men; that that dread was fast changing into confidence and contempt: confidence in his own numerical strength, in the inaccessible nature of the country he inhabited, in his *increased* resources, in the arms with which he was supplied, in the experience which he had obtained from intercourse with us; contempt of our divided counsels, of our half measures, of our forbearance, which he construed into fear; they knew that though the crafty Kafir might be quietly planting his garden or herding his cattle, or even working for the hated *Umlungu* with apparent zeal and docility, he was only biding his time; that the fire which for three years had been smouldering unchecked, needed but a breath to kindle it into a flame.

They knew more; they knew that in the very nurseries of civilization, and alas! of religion, among the pet children of British philanthropy—cited as triumphant examples of converted heathenism—the seeds of rebellion had been long sown, and were fast arriving at maturity; that the pampered Hottentots, taught to consider themselves an oppressed and plundered people, and to regard the white colonist with suspicion and dislike, were ready to join their natural enemies, the Kafirs, against a Government which had spent more than £20,000 a-year in their support; that such a coalition had actually been formed on a previous occasion, and that the same agents who had produced it then were still at work, with all their exciting misguiding influence, their politico-religious agitation, their misstatements and exaggerations, their parade of sentiment, their enlisting of sympathies on the wrong side, their party spirit, their making the worse appear the better cause.*

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* This may perhaps appear strong language, and, indeed, if the evil were even now at an end, and the public secured from further delusion, one might be well content to let the facts speak for themselves, and to pass over in silence conduct which cannot but have a tendency to reflect disgrace on the sacred cause with which it has been associated. But such, unfortunately, is not the case. To the obstinate theorist, to the prejudiced partizan, it is easier to pervert truth than to admit its evidence against themselves, or their fixed code of opinions, though clear as noon-day. There is scarcely a colonist on the frontier (and who should be better able to judge?) who will not trace the Hottentot rebellion to missionary interference, the Kafir war to the policy with which it is connected (of course I speak of primary causes, not of the immediate pretext of the outbreak), and yet, in a book entitled "A Tour in Africa," written by the "Home Secretary to the London Missionary Society," and published in 1851, the author not only repeats the old cry of "Justice to the Native," with variations—not only makes up cases of oppression and hard treatment with a skill that would do credit to an Old Bailey lawyer—not only palliates rebellion, and so artfully excuses the rebel, that an enlightened (?) jury will not fail to find a verdict of acquittal for his client,—but boldly takes the bull by the horns, and speaks of the notorious Kat River settlement (the great difficulty of Governor after Governor, the pest of the colony, the hot-bed of disaffection and sedition, and now the very centre whence revolt, robbery, and murder have spread over the surrounding country) in terms of perfect satisfaction and complacency, as "anything but a failure;" talks of its "brightening prospects," of the "thoughtful, intelligent, and earnest character of its population;" of their requiring "equitable treatment and kind encouragement;" of their being "*goaded* into unjustifiable extremes," etc. This gentleman appears to have travelled through Africa, lance in rest, as the avowed champion and knight-errant of discontented natives, and to have "run-a-muck" against all who differed from him in opinion. The following observation of Sir Harry Smith, in a despatch to Earl Grey, written in reply to some very trivial and unfounded complaints addressed to the latter by this gentleman, on the subject of the annexation of the Sovereignty, and the alleged forcibly depriving the natives of part of their land, is a sufficient comment on the prejudiced spirit of a work, which, in the hands of weak or ignorant readers, is sure to produce a totally erroneous impression, and which appearing at a moment so critical as the present, and so fraught with danger to the very existence of the colony, is likely to work incalculable mischief. The author has the candour to insert the letter in his book, from which I make the extract:—"Judging of this gentleman by his proceedings while travelling in this colony, I may here remark, that like all prejudiced men, he seeks for evidence to strengthen his own preconceptions, and loses sight of the general bearing and view of the subjects upon which he has so freely commented;" and again, "I cannot refrain, my Lord, from adding, that if reverend gentlemen, in the position of Mr. Freeman, would take a comprehensive, and not a contracted and prejudiced view of matters affecting the object of their mission, a greater degree of benefit would arise to the parties whom their laudable exertions are intended to civilize." With regard to the war, Mr. Freeman gravely advises us *at once* to enter on a system of *conciliation* and *justice*,—rather contradictory terms when applied to acknowledged rebels and traitors in arms,—and sums up his lengthy sketch by a recommendation that the coloured races of Africa should be put on a level with the civilized nations of Europe, and that no affront should

There is not the least doubt that if left to himself, and allowed to make the best use of his own resources in his own defence, unhampered by political or philanthropic interference, the border colonist would have held his ground against the native without the aid of a single *roode baatye* (red coat), or the discharge of a single cannon. There would have been some rough work; doubtless, cases of reckless daring, of fierce retaliation, of bloodshed, of cruelty and injustice, if you will, would have occurred, such as are best passed over in silence, such as swell the pages of Cooper's stirring novels, and furnish food for the horror-loving appetites of the listless reader; but there would have been no *Kafir War*, the treasury would not have spent millions in a contest at once fruitless and inglorious, the flower of our troops would not be wasting their valour against a foe utterly unworthy of their steel, and learning at the same time that most dangerous lesson for an army to learn—doubly dangerous now—the lesson of defeat;—and, for bloodshed, let the weeping mothers of the brave who have fallen by the bullet or assegai of the savage, or sunk beneath the hardships and privations of frontier war, say whether that has been spared!

The philanthropist (forgive me for misusing the term) is for ever ringing the changes upon the cry of "justice to the native," and there is a speciousness in this plea which attracts many; for what Englishman is not a friend to justice? Let us follow it out for a moment, and see where it will lead us. If we are to deal with the natives on the ground of strict justice, what right have we to occupy

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be offered to the former which we should not dare to offer to our most powerful continental neighbours! In the whole book there is not a word of pity for the poor colonist, robbed of his flocks and herds, his smiling homestead converted to a heap of smouldering ashes, his fruitful garden trampled into a waste, all the results of years of careful industry destroyed in an hour; no horror is expressed at the butchery of unoffending settlers with their families, men, women, and children! The crimes of murder, insult, plunder, and arson are glossed over, extenuated, almost justified on the plea of provocation, and our sympathy is requested on behalf of the criminal—the persecuted Kafir! the goaded Hottentot! When such sentiments as these fill books of 500 pages in length, when they are disseminated by a portion (however small and insignificant) of the public press, when respectable men stand forward on platforms, and enunciate them to crowded assemblies with all the aid of eloquence and dramatic effect; it behoves those who have a regard for truth and common sense, for the welfare of the colony, and the safety of those who have sought a home within its boundaries to speak plainly, earnestly, boldly. The subject is of too deep importance for mincing of words.

their country at all? What business have we in Africa, in Australia, in New Zealand, in America? No one, I suppose, would contend that the purchase of a territory for a looking-glass, a few beads, or a hatchet, was a fair and equitable transaction, or that the title thus conveyed had any better foundation than the old maxim:—

> "That they should take who have the power,
> And they should keep who can."

"But," urges Philanthropy, (shifting his ground as a lawyer knows how), "we deceived them for their good; we have come to soften, to teach, to civilize, to Christianize them; why should not the two nations dwell together in peace and friendship, on equal terms?" This argument is, if possible, still more specious than the other, but equally hollow and fallacious. In the first place, the civilization of the natives was the last object dreamed of by the avant-couriers of British occupation in any of our colonies. They were for the most part unscrupulous traders, and daring adventurers, men of desperate fortunes and characters, of strong hand, and hard heart, of firm will, and undaunted resolution; their motives, lust of gold, or of fame; a restless spirit, a feverish thirst for excitement—such have been the first instruments in the hands of an all-wise Providence for the accomplishment of that end, which, however retarded by temporary obstacles, is steadily advancing the spreading of the white man, and, with him, of civilization, knowledge, and religion over the whole surface of the earth as the waters cover the sea. Little recked these hardy pioneers of teaching or converting the savage. They met him as the hunter meets the wild beast in the wilderness; if timid and spiritless, they enslaved him; if bold and warlike, they fought and conquered him.

In the second place, the experience of ages, the records of colonial history, all the data with which the events of the past or the present supply us, unite in the confirmation of this fact, that the two races, the white and the coloured—be it black, brown, or red—cannot exist in close contact with each other, but on one condition—that of the entire dependence of the weaker upon the will of the stronger. The notion of equality, equality of rights, or equality of treatment, is at best an amiable theory, unsupported by a single evidence drawn from sound reason or experience. Where are the numerous and powerful tribes that, but a century ago, inhabited the eastern coasts of America?—a population that might be counted in nations! Broken, dispersed, destroyed; reduced to a small and miserable remnant, which, maugre all our efforts to preserve it, is fast dwindling away, and approaching the period of its utter dissolution. What of the Myal of Australia, the Maori of New Zealand? Fostered and protected by the Government with a care almost maternal, they are still, slowly it may be, yet perceptibly and surely, obeying the mysterious law which has ordained that the brown men should disappear before the white, as the snow melts beneath the rays of an April sun. Turn westward once more, and look at the southern states, the stronghold of that slavery which it is the boast of Britain that she has done her utmost to abolish. What do we see there? A people held in the closest bondage, subject to the severest restraints; if we are to believe all that is said of them, oppressed and persecuted; and yet, so far from decreasing under this harsh treatment, they have thriven and multiplied to an extent which already makes them formidable to their masters, and necessitates the employment of the strictest coercion to guard against the possibility of successful insurrection.

It is a question well worthy the consideration of the philosopher and ethnologist, how far the extinction of the coloured race is connected with the abolition of slavery, and whether England, in her laudable efforts for the universal freedom of the savage, has not been herself an unconscious means towards the fulfilment of his inevitable destiny.

Most of my readers have probably seen exhibited a cage, in which the sparrow and the hawk, the owl and the mouse, and other creatures between whom the fiercest antipathies are known to exist, dwell together in perfect security and concord. Did it for a moment occur to them that this principle could be carried with safety into general practice? Or did they, on the faith of this experiment, let loose an army of cats upon their aviary, or admit the fox into their poultry-yard? No. They kept the door closed against "Puss," and if they tried to domesticate Reynard, it was with a collar round his neck, and the length of his chain to limit his excursions. And thus it is with the rare instances of the perfectly tamed savages which are paraded at Exeter Hall meetings, or quoted by well-meaning, but enthusiastic and visionary theorists. They are the exceptions which serve to add strength to the general rule. The very *eclât* with which they are heralded should bid us beware of them; were they more common, they would excite less attention,—they would need less advertising. If we wish to avoid a general collision between the two races, such as is now taking place in South Africa, we have but two alternatives: to keep the native at arm's length, or keep him in subjection. I do not say in slavery,—though that is a question which admits of grave and serious discussion,—but in strict and positive submission. Let him once feel that he is independent, and he becomes from that moment dangerous. The case of the Kat River Hottentot, to which I have already made passing allusion, is a remarkable example of this rule. We found the Hottentot a slave; we made him free. We found him fast losing his claim to existence as a nation, and gradually amalgamating with the general community; we gathered together the scattered remnant, and planted it anew upon our borders, and concentrated into one body the fragments of its expiring vitality. We taught the emancipated serf to feel the value of his altered position; we filled him with notions of his own importance, of his own rights; we made him a discontented citizen, a rebel and a traitor. We sowed the seed, and, verily, we have reaped an abundant harvest.

But if the Hottentots, the aborigines of the soil, have thus rewarded our exertions in their behalf, the Kafir has a still slighter claim on our sympathy and protection. An intruder of comparatively recent date on the very ground which he occupies, he cannot urge the plea of ancient and undisturbed possession; the vanquisher and spoiler of other tribes, his tenure is that of all usurpers:—

> "By the sword they won the land,
> And by the sword they hold it still."

Almost destitute even of natural affection,* he has no home attachments, no ties of kindred but such as are connected with the desire of accumulating property, his wives and female children being literally his goods and chattels, and having a proportionate value in cattle, according to their age or appearance. Utterly incapable of gratitude, he is as unable to appreciate kindness or forbearance, as he is as sure to take advantage of it to the injury of his benefactor. By profession a warrior, by education and habit a thief, by nature bloodthirsty, cruel, and treacherous, he is a formidable enemy, a dangerous and troublesome neighbour; but most formidable and most dangerous as a friend.

With a people of this character, and of such imposing numerical strength (Mr. Freeman estimates the Kafirs in South Africa, already well known to us, as amounting to 2,000,000, and I have no doubt he is under the mark), it is obvious that the safest course would have consisted in the first of the two alternatives which I have suggested above, viz., in keeping them at a distance; and it would have been well if, in the enlargement of our colonial boundaries, we had followed the wise example of the American government, and removed the native tribes far beyond the border line, and the chance of collision with our settlers;† if, instead of compelling the Boers, who, with all

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* The following illustration of this heartless trait in the Kafir character, which came under the notice of the missionary at Beersheba, a Basuto station on the Caledon River, is related by Mr. Freeman, in the work which I have already quoted :—"Mr. Rolland, on conversing with me about his station, remarked that on his first coming to reside here, he was much struck with the *almost total absence of children.* On inquiry it appeared that most of them had been destroyed, thrown away, or devoured, during the wars. In trying to make their escape from a pursuing and ferocious enemy, none but women of a very strong and healthy condition could save their infants, whom they were obliged to carry with them in flight; and often when it was found that these infants impeded the mother's progress, and so hindered the escape of the parents, the father would call out, 'Throw away that thing,' meaning the infant. The command was obeyed, and so the child perished."—Page 338.

† Did the views which I have here and elsewhere advocated, on this important subject, need further illustration, they could not be more strongly confirmed than by the following passage from the pen of Mr. Power, author of "Sketches in New Zealand," a work which has been justly characterized by Mr. Sidney, in his "Emigrant's Journal," as the only recent full and impartial account of that singular country. It is with great pleasure that I note this coincidence of opinion, which did not meet my eye till after this chapter was completed :—

"It appears to me, also, to have been a mistaken and injudicious policy to have their faults, were the best guardians of our territories, to seek an asylum across the Vaal, there to relapse into barbarism, and nourish disaffection to our government, we had forced the Kafir back in a northerly direction, keeping him always before us in our gradual advance towards the centre of the continent, the restless colonist, discontented with our narrow limits, might still have sought a wider range of pasture, a more ample field of enterprize and adventure; the Boer might still have trekked inwards; the Smous have extended the circle of his trade; the hunter his quest of game or ivory; the white man might still have encroached upon the territories of the black, and border feuds raged with undiminished violence; but within the colony there would have been peace and security. Agriculture and commerce would have thriven, unchecked by the devastating tide of war, or the blighting influence of panics and alarms: and when the rifle of the hardy pioneer had triumphed over the assegai of the savage—when the nearest tribe had been cowed into submission, or driven into retreat, and the flow of population towards that quarter not only warranted annexation, but made it a wise and necessary measure, government might have stepped forward and entered into quiet and undisturbed possession of an additional province, of which, as the acquisition had been costless, so neither would the retention have been likely to involve future embarrassment or danger.

But a course so simple and straightforward is little suited to the theorizing politician who delights in the intricacies of a tangled skein, and prefers any means, however complicated, to those which suggest themselves at once to ordinary comprehensions. And so, instead of driving the Kafir back, we have hemmed him in; instead of a well-

extended English law and government to the whole island at once; and it would have been better to have imitated our Yankee friends, in advancing our frontier only as we required more room and verge. Beyond a declared line, the natives might have been left to their own management; and then, if settlers, or pioneers, attracted by good soil, at convenient situations, chose to cross the boundary and squat among them, it ought to have been at their own risk, so as not to have drawn the Government into the dilemmas we have seen at Manawata, Wanganni, and Taranaki, and which, under less judicious management than that of Governor Grey, might have ended in the destruction of the colony."—*Sketches in New Zealand, by* W. Tyrone Power, D.A.C.G.

defined border between the white man and the black, we have established one between the two portions of our scanty European population; instead of letting our pioneers clear the ground, and ourselves reaping the profit, we have not only harassed and abused them while working, but have, in more than one instance, undone their work when completed. Instead of holding the Kafir in wholesome subjection, we have tried to rule him by an elaborate policy which has not even the merit of consistency to recommend it. We have suffered the two races to play the old game of "Tit tat to" over the surface of South Africa; aud it is still a question who is to be the winner. The war, miscalled a frontier war, is really in the very centre of our possessions; for, like a pursuing enemy, we have pressed onwards with such incautious haste, that we are in our turn surrounded and exposed to a cross fire.

With regard to the cumbrous machinery which we have employed in our attempt to govern the native, I will not try the reader's patience by taking it to pieces, or pointing out all its defects and contradictions. It may be sufficient to observe, that neither in the Glenelg system of conciliation, nor in the coercive system established by Sir Benjamin d'Urban, are the materials to be found for securing the blessings of peace and order to the colony: the absurdity of the former needs, I trust, no further demonstration,—founded on false principles, and based on an entirely mistaken estimate of the character of those to whom it was to be applied, its failure was obvious and inevitable; while the latter, though sound in theory, broke down from the impossibility of carrying it out, on a large scale, with sufficient vigour to ensure its success.

But there is, thank Heaven, a bright lining to the darkest cloud; and even the Kafir war, with all its disasters, will be a happy epoch for South Africa, if her colonists will but all agree to read the lesson aright, and to insist upon the only course which can save them from utter ruin. We have reached a point where hesitation is dangerous, and retreat impossible; our fine-spun webs of policy are scattered to the winds; our diplomatic negotiations, our well-digested plans, have proved fruitless and unavailing. Like obstinate, blundering Englishmen, as we are, we have walked with open eyes into the snare; like determined Englishmen we must cut our way out with the sword.

"Now closed is the gin, and the prey within,
By the Rood of Lanercost;
But he that would win the war-wolf's skin
May rue him of his boast."

The question is now reduced to a very simple one: Are we to retain Africa, or to abandon it? If we choose the former alternative, and for very shame we dare not do otherwise, we must waste no time in party strife, in long deliberations and wire-drawn arguments, in timid calculations of expense and petty measures of economy. The saving of a few tons of coal in the voyage between England and the Cape, will not recompense us for the loss of a regiment; and no expense will be so heavy as that which we shall incur by delay. The combat is *à l'outrance*,—let it be short, sharp, and decisive. If we throw our undivided energies into the scale, there can be no doubt of the result. But, chiefly, let us beware, lest in our haste to sheathe the sword, we do so before it has half completed its work; lest, in our eagerness for peace, we buy it on such terms as will only sow the seeds of future war. In the early spring you may kill the queen wasp, and escape the pest of her brood; in the summer you must burn out the nest.

The Kafir has fairly forfeited his claim to the south-east corner of Africa. He should be no longer suffered to retain it. Let the coast-line from Natal to Algoa Bay, from the Stormberg and Kathlamba Mountains to the sea,—probably the richest and most fertile part of the colony,—be swept clean of these robber tribes, for whom, towards the north-west corners of the Sovereignty, or even beyond the Vaal, in an open and accessible country, a fit asylum might easily be found. Let the conquered territory be divided into farms of available size, according to the different qualities of soil, the supply of water, and other local circumstances; and let such farms be freely granted, on condition of occupation and gradual improvement, to English emigrants, and to such of the exiled Dutch as would then gladly return to their allegiance. Let all large settlements of natives within the colony be done away with, and let them, if retained at all, be dispersed, in families, among those settlers who desire it,—who will allow them to cultivate for themselves only so long as they supply a certain amount of labour, in proportion to their numbers and the land they occupy: but no idle married men, supported by the labour of their wives, should on any account be tolerated; no chiefs be permitted to exercise the slightest authority. I will not now enter further upon the details of a plan of which the most obvious advantages are—first, an unbroken line of communication between the two extremes of our South African possessions; secondly, the certainty that whatever dangers might threaten us from without, we should be secure against treachery from within; thirdly, that the defence of the colony being entrusted to the owners of the soil, its proper protectors, there would be no need of a military establishment, beyond what would be required for parade purposes,—to sustain the prestige of the Governor, to keep up the spirit of credit among the merchants and tradesmen, and to save the Cape Town belles from civilians and despair. We should have no grave proposals for the construction of a Corniche road across the Amatolas, or a Via Appia through the Waterkloof. The bush, where too extensive, might be reduced by fire; and the kloofs would harbour no deadlier inmate than the tiger or buffalo. And, lastly, government would regain the confidence, the affection, the loyalty, of all the European subjects. They would feel that they were no longer to be sacrificed on the shrine of canting pseudo-philanthropy or stereotyped humbug; that their right to self-defence was become tardily acknowledged and respected; and that they would be henceforth treated at least on an equality with the savage, and entitled to an equal share of consideration and support.

But another alternative has lately begun to suggest itself, first in mysterious whispers, as if its advocates were ashamed of it, then in louder hints; till at length it finds place in the official instructions to the newly-appointed Governor of the Cape, as a question of serious consideration, and is openly recommended in the leading articles of our metropolitan journals. And this alternative is the contraction of our frontiers within such limits as we can easily defend, or, in other words (for to that, if once begun, it must eventually lead), the abandonment of Kafirland to the Kafir; the Sovereignty to the six or seven tribes within it; and Natal to the Zulus, or rather to the Boers, who would be quietly located in Maritzburg within a month of our departure.

Now, I have already endeavoured to show that our advance towards the interior of Africa has been far too rapid and incautious; that we have allowed our mania for exploration and discovery to lead us into unnecessary danger; and that we should have done far better had we waited for the natural course of events, which must sooner or later place the whole of the continent at our disposal. But the conviction of this error, which is now forcing itself on the minds of even the most superficial observers, does not in any way justify a retrograde movement. The very *morale* of such a step—apart from the particular circumstances of the case which stamp it with folly and injustice—is entirely at variance with the true spirit of colonization, and could not fail to weaken the prestige of our authority, not only in South Africa, but in all our colonial possessions. Our settlers are both able and willing to defend themselves; but they will not feel much gratitude or respect towards a government which has promised so much and performed so little, which, after tying their arms behind their backs, and bidding them rely on it alone for safety, deserted them in the hour of peril, granting them then, when it could no longer be retained, the boon which they had so often asked in vain, and which amounts pretty much to this,—that as the government is unable to protect the colonist, the colonist may now protect himself, unless he likes to give up his farm, and retire within the new boundary; *i. e.*, to be ruined. There can be little doubt which course he will pursue, and the result will be that, besides the 1200 Dutch now beyond the Vaal, we shall have an independent population, three times the number, growing up without the pale of our dominions, in disaffection to the Crown; and that when, in course of time, the game of annexation has to be played over again, it will be attended with difficulties of a novel character, but as formidable, and far more painful than those which oppose us now.

On the Kafir the effect of our retreat would be obviously to increase his audacity, and stimulate him with a nearer view of the realization of his darling project,—the driving the white man into the great sea. He would still hang upon our skirts, and follow our retiring herds, if we contracted our borders to within sight of Table Mountain; and five years hence, the alternative of a war of extermination, or the entire abandonment of the colony, might present itself, under far less favourable circumstances than at present, and when the odds against us, in case of our adopting the former decision, might be fearfully augmented. No! let us not think of yielding a single inch of soil to the robber band who would never be content with less than all; let them not find that they can set at naught our laws, insult our authority, and defy our vengeance with impunity! Above all, let it not be said that Britain returned from a contest, and with such a foe, —*relictâ non benè parmulâ!*

And for the ground which we occupy in Africa, though it be more extensive than either our necessities require or wisdom would have advised, yet we cannot now spare an acre of it; least of all, can we suffer Kafirland, in the hands of an enemy, to interrupt our coast-line, and isolate our best-promising offspring, Natal. Even the Sovereignty must not now be resigned; though, being comparatively free from bush, it can never become a dangerous harbour for native marauders. Let us keep the advantages we have gained, though at a cost so far beyond their value; it is much easier and safer to hold them now than to recover them if once abandoned. With a healthy system, founded on sound practical common-sense, and carried out vigorously and consistently, we shall have no difficulty in maintaining our ground; and the Kafir war, once brought to a complete and successful issue, will be the last in the records of British colonial history.

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CHAPTER XIII.

ALARM AT MARITZBURG—DISBANDING OF YEOMANRY—ZULU EXPEDITION—ITS CHANCES—MR. SHEPSTONE—THE PRESS—PROJECT ABANDONED—HISTORY OF THE ZULUS—ANCIENT INHABITANTS OF NATAL—CHAKA—DINGAAN—PANDA—ZULU IMMIGRATION—JOHN BULL'S SOLILOQUY—EMBARASSMENTS—MR. CLOETE'S OPINION ON MANAGEMENT OF REFUGEE ZULUS—PLAN OF THE COMMISSIONERS—PLAN OF THE COLONIAL SECRETARY—ITS RECEPTION IN THE COLONY—FINAL PROMULGATION AND EFFECTS—MR. WEST—MR. PINE—HOPES AND FEARS.

NEVER shall I forget the effect which the tidings of the melancholy events of Christmas 1850, and the subsequent proclamation of war upon the frontier, produced upon the hitherto quiet and peaceful inhabitants of Natal. It was as if a firebrand had been thrown into the centre of the colony. The spirit of the young man, eager and impetuous, bounded at the prospect of action and excitement; the confident made light of the danger, or denied its existence; while the prudent and experienced received the news, without fear indeed, but with sorrow and grave misgiving; the many with ill-concealed apprehension; and the weak and timid with undisguised alarm. All subjects of minor interest, business, or pleasure—even scandal, that never-failing topic in a country town—ceased for the time to engage attention. Old men and beldames did not prophecy in the streets, for there are as yet few specimens of eld in our little metropolis; but had the "gentle Hubert" been amongst us, he would have seen full as many gaping mouths, and faces of anxious curiosity, and heard as many incredible stories, as when five moons shed their baleful light upon distressed England, and the tale was told

> "Of a many thousand warlike French
> That all embattled were, and ranked in Kent."

Nor was the sensation confined to the town. From distant and outlying stations emigrants brought in their wives and children, not content till they had placed them under the range of the guns of Fort Napier and the immediate protection of the gallant 45th; while sturdy settlers formed bands for mutual support, and busied themselves in the construction of *laagers*, or fortified kraals, to which they might drive their cattle at the first appearance of danger, and within which, should it become necessary, they were prepared to defend themselves, and their families and their property, against any number of enemies, to the last gasp.

Our Lieutenant-Governor was not the man to suffer all this excitement to die away without turning it to some useful purpose. His first act was to disband the yeomanry, which had hitherto been a merely ornamental corps, rendered still less efficient by being composed of elements which no skill could induce to amalgamate, and chiefly remarkable for its handsome and expensive uniform, which did great credit to the taste of one of its officers, the principal tailor in the town. A good militia system was much needed, and I believe Mr. Pine's plan would have fully met the contingency; but the want of active co-operation among the colonists themselves, and other obstacles,—among which, I am sorry to say, factious opposition was the most prominent and most insurmountable,—prevented him from putting his design into execution at the moment. Long ere this, I doubt not, he has succeeded in perfecting an arrangement so indispensable for the safety of the colony.

But his activity did not rest here. Ere long we were startled by rumours of a project, which was certainly one of the boldest, and wanted but success to make it one of the most splendid ever conceived by prompt and daring leader at the critical moment. This was no less than to despatch a force of 10,000 Zulus, headed by their own chiefs, under the supreme command of Mr. Shepstone, the Diplomatic Agent, through Faku's and Kreli's country, with the view of creating a diversion in favour of Sir Harry Smith, by taking the Gaikas in the rear, and of overawing the hitherto neutral tribes to the south-west of Natal, so as to prevent them from joining in the war. Mr. Pine had, I believe, on a former occasion, suggested the idea to Sir Harry, who had now taken him at his word, and required the fulfilment of his somewhat rashly made promise.

It was a question much debated at the time, whether, in such an expedition, the chances of success or failure predominated. Those who took a favourable view of the matter, dwelt on the deadly enmity which has always existed between the Zulus, and the frontier Kafirs, and on the dread which the peculiar mode of warfare employed by the former has ever inspired among the neighbouring tribes. The Zulus fight in serried phalanx, hand to hand, and use the assegai as a pike and dagger; while almost all other Kafir nations use it as a javelin, which, though they hurl it at a distance of thirty yards, with great precision and effect, is yet by no means so formidable at that distance as at close quarters; besides which, when their sheaf of five is exhausted, they are temporarily *hors-de-combat*. It is a point of honour with the Zulu to bring his assegais out of the battle; the non-observance of this law was formerly, nay I believe is now, beyond the limits of British authority, visited by the chiefs with capital punishment, whether the issue of the combat has been victory or defeat.

Great faith too, and not without reason, was reposed in the known abilities of the Diplomatic Agent, and in the influence which his thorough knowledge of the language, his position, and, more than all, the energy and decision of his character, enabled him to exercise, notwithstanding the insufficiency of the means at his command, over the coloured population of Natal. If there were a white man in Africa who could raise an army of savages, and, when raised, command it, that man was Mr. Shepstone.

Add to this the incitement of a promised share in the spoil, and the prospect of returning rich in plundered herds,—so likely to prove powerful agents in securing the active co-operation and fidelity of these irregular troops,—and the fair side of the question is pretty fully before us.

Unfortunately there was a reverse to the picture, one which presented itself much more readily to the eyes of the general run of observers, and carried with it a far greater appearance of reality. To arm the savage and to lead him forth to battle, under any circumstances, seemed at best a hazardous experiment, fraught with danger to the colony at large, and more especially to those to whom the task of carrying it out should be entrusted. To lead Kafir against Kafir, and that at a period when a universal coalition of the black tribes against the white man was the threatening cloud in the horizon, seemed little short of actual insanity. National sympathies, and the awakened hope of triumph over the common foe, would in all probability outweigh the recollection of extinct feuds, and the expectation of an allotment of spoil; and desertion or treachery once within the camp, the influence of Mr. Shepstone would be as a reed hedge before a torrent, equally powerless to check the stream, or save itself from destruction. Setting this risk aside there was the possibility of defeat, involving consequences almost equally disastrous, and, from the confidence which it would give to the rebel bands, more fatal to the cause of the royal troops, than the mere non-arrival of such questionable assistance. But even supposing that none of these apprehensions were realized and that the expedition, as far as its immediate object went, were crowned with success; who could pledge himself for the harmless return of the victors to their peaceful avocations? A disbanded soldiery was proverbially a curse to the country upon which they were let loose; how much more an army of savages, flushed with recent triumph, their natural ferocity excited by the taste of blood from which they had been gradually estranged, and their cupidity just sufficiently whetted by partial indulgence to make them long for the opportunity of satisfying it without restraints. Meanwhile the levy of the Kafir tax, which was proceeding most prosperously, must be interrupted, and the colony lose, at a time when it was most needed, one of the chief sources of its revenue.

Nor were there wanting men short-sighted and selfish enough to argue that there was no need for Natal to interfere in a quarrel with which she had no concern, that the Cape colonists had no legitimate claim upon her assistance, and that it would be far wiser for her to husband her strength for her own defence than to waste it in sending help to those who might not prove equally ready to return the favour were the circumstances reversed.

But the main objection to the proposal was that it involved the absence of the Diplomatic Agent, and placed his life in jeopardy. The colony could not spare Mr. Shepstone; there was no one to supply his place, even for a single moment; should he fall there was no one to succeed him. While he was marching at the head of 10,000 Zulus, who was to manage the 190,000 that remained behind?

There were two newspapers in Maritzburg. If any of my readers wish to know what sort of a thing a colonial newspaper is, I cannot do better than refer them to the pages of "Pickwick," where they will find an apt representation, not the least exaggerated, in the *Eatanswill Gazette* and *Independent.* Mr. Pott and his antagonist, of *buff* notoriety, will stand very well for the respective editors, who were of course at daggers drawn, and who, if they did not actually belabour one another with carpet bags and broomsticks, yet contrived to carry on a very pretty duello with the goose-quill which they wielded with tremendous effect. The interesting details of the warfare, varied by unsparing attacks upon all constitutional authorities, and enlivened by a happy mixture of personal abuse and private scandal, made their clamours on the whole excessively piquant and entertaining. Even with all these attractions however, to say nothing of the satirical pieces by the colonial Byron, the sonnets by the young Minerva, whom nobody could identify, and the spirited advertisements, master-pieces in the puff style, by our George Robins, whom not to know was to be unknown, the want of novelty would sometimes make itself felt, and it may easily be imagined with what avidity a topic of such universal interest, and affording such ample field for discussion as the Lieutenant-Governor's project, was seized upon by the rival dignitaries of the Maritzburg press. The *Natal Witness* was first in the field, and took up the opposition side with such rabid violence as almost to defeat its own object, by shaming all but the most shameless into something like a spirit of loyalty, and alienating from its party all the respectable portion of the populace, whose organ it affected to be. Had her Majesty's representative been set in the pillory, as the butt for plebeian insolence and rotten eggs, he could not have been assailed by coarser witticisms, or pelted with a greater collection of filth, than was hurled at his devoted head from the printing-office in "Church Street." I need scarcely say, that Mr. Pine treated all these attacks with the contempt they deserved, and that their effect was rather to increase than to diminish his popularity; but one could not help doubting whether, after all, the boasted liberty of the press might not be a questionable advantage, and sighing for the revival of some good old law for slitting the ears of impertinent slanderers.

As for Mr. Shepstone, the object of so much tender solicitude on the part of those would-be patriots, he was too busy with the preparation for the ensuing campaign to trouble himself about the opinions of his neighbours. On accepting the charge, he had only stipulated that, as the whole responsibility must devolve on himself and his brother officers of the Kafir police, so the risk incurred, and the glory to be gained, should be confined to them; and two or three young colonists, who would gladly have shared the perils of the adventure, met with a somewhat cavalier refusal. That point settled, he devoted himself with his accustomed energy to the task imposed upon him. Messages were sent to all the petty chiefs resident within the district, bidding them appear with their following, on a certain day, at the Unzinculu drift, which was the appointed muster-place of the expedition; and no arguments were omitted which were likely to ensure a ready and punctual obedience. How these summonses were in all cases received, and whether the contemplated gathering of the clans would have been effected or not, it is no easy matter, among many contradictory reports, to decide. My own opinion is, that the Zulus, as a body, were disinclined to move—first, because in spite of big words and bombast, with which the young warriors abounded, they were really and truly afraid, the courage for which, under the despotic rule of their kings, they obtained so much credit, being rather attributable to the fact that cowardice and defeat were visited with certain death, than to any inherent quality existing within themselves. Many of them, indeed, especially in the country, where, from rare intercourse with the white man, they had made little progress in the art of dissembling, did not scruple to confess this weakness, and without any apparent shame or reluctance, the invariable answer to my question, whether they intended joining the expedition, being *Kafula byna bang; Amakosa byna schelm?**

Happily for Mr. Shepstone, the interruption to his proceedings came from a quarter over which he had no control, and he was spared the mortification of an acknowledged failure. The popular cry became too strong to be safely resisted. The factious editor, not content with the legitimate vehicle which his paper afforded for disseminating his opinions, and determined at any cost to achieve notoriety, had recourse to another expedient, and, availing himself of a smattering of legal knowledge (for he joined the profession of lawyer to numerous other avocations), brought an action against the captain and officers of the Kafir police, with the view of compelling them, under pain of divers penalties, to disobey the orders of the Lieutenant-Governor, and remain within the territory (*ne exeant règno*); and, that nothing might be wanting to express the virtuous indignation of this gentleman and his clique, a memorial was drawn up by the same hand, and signed by a sprinkling of malcontents, such as may always be found ready to take part against the powers that be, petitioning for the recall of Mr. Pine, and the appointment of some more eligible person as his succeesor.

Heaven help the colony if they had been permitted to choose for themselves! As for the action, it did positively come before the court, where it was very summarily disposed of; and the memorial fell through for want of cordial support. But I fancy that neither Mr. Pine nor the Diplomatic Agent were sorry to find in them a full and sufficient cause for the abandonment of an enterprize which had proved much less feasible than they had anticipated, and in the prosecution of which they had already encountered so much difficulty and annoyance.

The tryst day was first deferred for a week, then for a longer period, till at length the affair sunk into silence, and died a natural death, its only effect having been to give a handle to political and seditious agitators, to throw the whole coloured population into a ferment, and to put a complete stop, for the time, to Kafir labour, to the no small inconvenience of farmers, merchants, and housekeepers, in town and country. It was for some time rumoured that Mr. Fynn, the Resident Agent in Faku's country, would be despatched with a much smaller force, selected from the Kafirs south of the Uncomazi River; but this also expired, and the following scrap, taken from among the "*On dits*" of the *Natal Independant*, April 10, 1851, (a paper which, I must do it the justice of observing, had embraced the side of moderation and respectability throughout the late discussion), contains probably the last notice of the grand Zulu expedition:—"Resident Agent Fynn, it is said, has collected an army of fifteen men; if true, he had better say to them, 'Begone, brave army, and don't kick up a row.'"

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* The Kafir is very frightened—the Amakosa is a great rogue.

But though we have done with the expedition, we cannot thus unceremoniously dismiss the Zulus themselves from our pages. They are of far too great importance already, and are likely to exercise far too great an influence on the destinies of Natal to be so lightly passed over; besides which, the reader is doubtless anxious to know more of their history, of their present position, and of the policy which we have adopted towards them, than can be found in any one work on South Africa yet published. He must not therefore be alarmed if I carry him back to a very early period, nor complain if, in order to present a complete sketch, I am obliged to lead him over ground which, it is possible, he may have travelled before, and in pleasanter company. The journey will not be long, and some features in the scenery may still be new to him.

Our first authentic accounts of Natal are now nearly two hundred years old. They are obtained chiefly from enterprizing navigators and shipwrecked sailors; and in spite of a strong tinge of the romance, for which the reports of travellers in those times are proverbially famous, are full of entertaining and useful information. From them we learn that the whole country was thickly inhabited by a pastoral people, evidently of the Kafir race, yet differing in many important respects from the present occupants, and equally distinct from the frontier tribes with whom we are now at issue. They are represented as indolent, but cheerful and good-tempered, just in their dealings, kind and hospitable to strangers; and this character is confirmed by the experience of two English seamen, who resided five years amongst them, and whose departure is described as attended by some show of feeling on the part of their simple hosts, and some regret on their own.

We have no data for ascertaining the exact extent of territory occupied by this people; but it would seem probable that it must have comprised the whole region between the Kathlamba and the sea, as far, at least, in a north-easterly direction, as Delagoa Bay. This appears a key to the difficult question which would at once suggest itself, viz., how a population so quiet and peaceful in its habits, so little apparently trained to warfare, and yet offering so rich a temptation to the spoiler, should not only have preserved its existence, but have remained unmolested for a long series of years, in the immediate neighbourhood of a fierce tribe of warrior banditti, such as were their final conquerors, the Zulus. It agrees also with the generally received theory which traces the origin of the Kafir to Arabia, or some other portion of the south-east corner of the Asiatic continent. We can easily imagine long intervals to have elapsed between the movements of different bodies of immigrants, in their gradual progress to the south-west, and that the first settlers upon any tract of country might have held undisturbed possession of it for centuries, before the pressure from the northward became so violent as to endanger their security, and force them to resistance or flight.

It was, not, however, in the nature of things that this security should last for ever. The evil day came at length, and when it came brought with it not danger only, but utter destruction. We are spared the details of the horrible massacre, for such it must have been, of this gentle and harmless people; we know not whether their limits were gradually contracted, and their numbers thinned, by a lengthened though unequal contest, or whether they perished all at one fell swoop; whether they showed the courage of despair in the last struggle, or were cut down trembling and unresisting; all we know is, that on the arrival of Lieutenants King and Farewell, in 1823, they found the whole country in the hands of the Zulus, and scarcely a vestige remaining of the ancient inhabitants. Of those who survived the indiscriminate slaughter, the greater part had been incorporated with the Zulu nation, a few escaped into the bush, and the rest, after enduring all the horrors of servitude to a foreign master, were removed to the old colony, where, under the name of Fingoes, or slaves, they have since proved the most faithful and tractable among the coloured subjects of the Crown, and still retain, in great measure unchanged, the peculiarities of character for which their ancestors were so favourably distinguished in days of yore.

But we must return to their conquerors. The Zulus, or Zoolahs (for there is no limit to the variations of Kafir orthography), appear to have been always under despotic government; a circumstance to which their strength as a military nation may be chiefly attributable. At the time of which I am speaking, their king was Chaka, a monster in comparison with whom the ogres of our nursery tales sink into mild and harmless insignificance.

I have already referred my readers to the pages of Mr. Isaacs' interesting work for a full account of the barbarities of this tyrant, which I will not here attempt to describe. He maintained his authority by the wholesale murder of his subjects, whenever they became too numerous, or too powerful to be easily kept in subjection. His standing army amounted probably to not less than 30,000 men, and he could at a few hours' notice bring more than double that force into the field. The discipline of these troops would have put to shame many a European regiment; like all good soldiers, they were equally serviceable as executioners; they knew no law but that of their general, and were as ready to turn their arms upon their countrymen, comrades and relations, as against a foreign foe. Their reviews, which were of frequent occurrence, were held not so much for the sake of display, or the practice of military evolutions,—though in these points they wanted nothing of brilliancy and perfection of detail,—as for the ulterior purpose of slaughter; and the butchery of eight hundred unoffending creatures in a single morning, with every variety of torture, forms no very remarkable event in the annals of this reign of terror.

Alas! for civilization and refinement! for the arts that soften and humanize! for the profession of Christianity! While we shudder at the bare recital of these horrors, not only is their parallel enacted within a stone's throw (so to speak) of our doors, but men look on with calm indifference; and some there are bold enough to defend and applaud! Tried by the test which these men would adopt, Chaka was doubtless a bold and successful politician, a wise and prudent monarch. He was an usurper certainly; but he preserved his nation from the evils of anarchy and confusion, and deserves to be chronicled as a staunch friend to order, discipline and passive obedience. "*Respice finem respice funem*," "look to the end, look to a rope's end," says the old proverb; and we who view all Chakas with the same abhorrence, whether they be dressed in fine linen, or untanned hide, whether they dwell in marble palaces, or in grass-roofed huts, may comfort ourselves with the assurance that their tether is a very limited one, and that the day of retribution will not be long delayed.

Chaka having filled the measure of his enormities, was assassinated by his subjects, and was succeeded by his brother, Dingaan, who had been at the head of the conspiracy. Before his death he had made over a portion of his newly-acquired dominions to the English in the person of Lieutenant Farewell, and, finding the country which he still retained too extensive for the system of concentration necessary to the security of a despotic government, had retired with his whole tribe to the north-eastern bank of the Tugela, which henceforth constituted the south-western boundary of the Zulu territory, properly so-called. Natal was thus left almost entirely deserted. About 2000 of the original inhabitants still remained, widely scattered in small parties in the neighbourhood of the fort, where the thick bush enabled them to evade the pursuit of the Zulus; and these, according to a report drawn up in 1843, by the resident commissioner, Mr. Cloete, formed on the arrival of the earliest emigrants, the entire population of the country. "These natives," continues Mr. Cloete, "placed themselves and their descendants under the protection of the European residents at the fort, to whom they voluntarily acknowledge their state of vassalage."

Meanwhile, the new King of the Zulus, though he was willing to tolerate the intrusion of a few white men, dwelling along the sea-coast, and within certain limits, was yet by no means disposed to ratify the bargain of his predecessor, or to relinquish all claim to the conquered territory; and when in 1838 the Dutch emigrants, rolling their wagons down the steep sides of the Drakenberg, poured into the fertile plains of Natal, expecting to take peaceful possession, they were encountered by a fierce and determined opposition, and had to fight their way, inch by inch, to the site of their future capital. The hardy Boer, however, was a very different foe from the timid and effeminate native; and though he suffered severely, and the soil of the promised land was plentifully watered with his blood, yet, in the end, he proved more than a match for his savage antagonist. The massacre at Blaauw Krans Spruit, recorded in an earlier chapter, is but one of the many tragedies which signalized this short, but eventful contest—a contest in which we have the greatest interest, since we alone reaped its fruits. We all know how it terminated; Dingaan was compelled to retreat within his legitimate boundary, well pleased to have concluded a bargain, by which he transferred to the victors on very reasonable terms, the land which had already been disposed of by his predecessor, while the Boers founded Maritzburg, and constituted themselves into an independent republic.

In due time, Dingaan met with the usual fate of Zulu monarchs, leaving behind him a name, which, whether for good or ill, is constantly in the mouth of his former subjects and their descendants, whose invariable form of emphatic affirmation is "Yebo Dingaan." He was succeeded by Panda, the present king, of whom we have every reason to say "*vivat*;" for, being too fat and too lazy for violent exercise, he is averse to war, and, on the whole, is rather amiably disposed than otherwise towards his sister sovereign Queen Victoria. There is no saying how soon his death might change the face of affairs.

Among his own people he is as great a tyrant as were either Dingaan or Chaka, but his resources have been considerably diminished, and the whole of his available force cannot now be estimated at more than 15,000 men. It is to the cause of this decrease of power that I wish especially to call the reader's attention.

The occupation of Natal by the Umlungus had another effect besides defining the boundaries of the Zulu kingdom. It opened a door of escape for the oppressed subjects of these arbitrary monarchs, which they had never before dreamed of, and which now baffled all their precautions. Even in Dingaan's time, those who had incurred his displeasure, and who but a short time before would have submitted in sullen despair to the seizure of their cattle, the abduction of their wives, or the fatal stab of the assegai, now fled across the border, and threw themselves upon the protection of the white man. This was more particularly the case with the transplanted natives, who were treated with tenfold cruelty by their captors, and on whom the hope of returning to their native soil, under any terms, acted like an irresistible spell. Dingaan did not care to follow up the pursuit; he had had sufficient experience of the Dutch roer, and had no mind to venture again within its deadly range. The example of flight was therefore caught up with avidity, and Natal promised to be speedily repopulated.

The new republic looked on this inroad with a jealous and watchful eye; they were well pleased to find a supply of herdsmen to tend their rapidly-increasing troops of cattle, and to perform those menial offices, in which, before the days of emancipation, they had been always accustomed to employ slave labour; but, on the other hand, they were fully sensible of the danger of allowing the savage to take fresh root in the soil, whence it might be difficult a second time to eradicate him. It was, therefore, decreed by a resolution of the "*Volksraad*," that no additional natives should be allowed to take up their residence within the colony, save and except the number of able-bodied young men actually employed by the settlers; and that this number should be limited to five males for each farmer without their families. By this wise measure a check was put upon the threatened inundation, which, under proper control, became a manageable and fertilizing stream.

But in 1842 the scene was shifted; the pastoral republic had played out its last act, and a new set of characters appeared upon the stage. British rule was once more proclaimed; the elaborate machinery of the Colonial Office replaced the simple working of a patriarchal government; experiment superseded experience; and, instead of the practical remedy suggested on the spot by each succeeding emergency, was substituted a procrustean code, for universal application, imported from distant head-quarters, and contrived with a noble disregard of place, time, and circumstance. In short, the motto of this administration was, though in a very different sense from that which the poet intended—

> "Mihi res, non me rebus, subjungere conor."

The unlucky Boer, harassed with restrictions to which he was little accustomed, and technicalities which he little understood—distrustful even where his interest was consulted, and having but too many grounds for reasonable complaint—struggled awhile among the meshes in which he found himself entangled, till at length he fairly shook the dust off his feet, and, quitting the country of his affections, sought a new home in wilds where red tape is yet unknown, and Downing Street influence, with its Briarean arms, has not yet been able to reach.

Nor was this the only result of British occupation. The Zulu malcontents, discovering as if by instinct that all bar to their entrance was now removed, swarmed by thousands into the deserted country, and, led by their different petty chiefs, settled themselves wherever choice or fancy directed; herded their cattle, built their huts, and planted their mealies, as quietly and coolly as if they had recaptured the territory, and had no leave to ask but their own.

But what did "John Bull" say to all this? At first he was taken by surprise; so he stared and said nothing. Then he began to grumble, and talked about interfering in the matter—a threat which, of course, he never carried into execution. At length a happy thought struck him; his countenance brightened; he put his hands in his breeches'-pocket, and, with a good-humoured smile, gave utterance to something like the following sentiment:—"It can't be helped now;

so the less said about it the better. It does seem a little strange, certainly, to drive out white farmers to make room for black thieves; but, after all, I do not much like those Boers; they were too sturdy and independent to be pleasant neighbours; and as to these poor black cattle, who's afraid of them? Let them come in—the more the merrier; we can always turn them out if they are troublesome. It would be a disgrace to humanity to refuse them admittance; and, besides" (and here he is said to have chuckled audibly) "the best part of it is, that they bring us the very thing we want, in common with every other colony—cheap labour; and with cheap labour and cheap land, if the fortune of Natal is not made." John smote his pockets till the silver rattled again, and relapsed into a state of complacent tranquility.

And thus Natal became, as the mother country ever has been, one great city of refuge for her distressed neighbours; and the cruelties of Panda,—who had himself, during the reign of his predecessor, headed a body of these fugitives,—becoming day after day more insupportable, the plot continued to thicken, till, by 1845, there were not less than 120,000 Zulus established within the colony. Their numbers, at the present moment, cannot amount to less than 200,000,

Now, those who sustained the argument I have just quoted,—and, in sober sadness, it was advanced by very many at the time,—laboured under a threefold delusion:—First, that it was safe to admit the Zulus; secondly, that it was a duty; and, lastly, that the colonists would be the gainers by it. On the two first points I have stated my opinion so fully in the last chapter, that I can add nothing of my own that will not be mere repetition, and am quite content to leave them to the judgment of the unprejudiced reader. In support of those opinions, I will only adduce the testimony of Sir Henry Pottinger, contained in the following extract from a despatch, addressed, in July, 1847, to Mr. West, late Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, as it suggests a new and forcible argument, peculiar to the case under consideration:—"My conviction daily becomes stronger that it is desirable to check, as far as possible, the influx of petty chiefs and their tribes into Natal, both because they occupy land which may hereafter be turned to better account for European settlers, and, more particularly, because our affording protection to such refugees seems sure to involve us in angry and unsatisfactory discussions with their paramount chiefs, over whose conduct and proceedings we can hardly be said to hold the smallest control."

When I add that nearly half a thick volume of Blue Book is occupied by negotiations between the King Panda and the Natal government,—all, without exception, undertaken with the view of settling disputes arising frm this one cause, and in which, if an open rupture has been avoided, it has been only by the nicest tact and most skilful manœuvring,—it will be seen how fully subsequent events have justified these apprehensions.

With regard to the third delusion—the most attractive and the most deceitful of all—I have already shown what dependence can be placed on Zulu labour: I will now go further, and assert that not only has the experiment failed to realize the hopes that were built upon it, but that its positive results have had a directly contrary effect; and have tended rather to cripple and impede the efforts of the settlers than to give them the assistance and encouragement which was contemplated by its well-meaning but mistaken advocates. Instead of providing the farmer with cheap labour, we have brought a rival producer into the market, to whom we have given every possible advantage, as if those which nature had given did not render him sufficiently formidable. The Zulu has nothing to learn or unlearn; he attempts nothing new, he risks no loss; he incurs no expense; and though he shows but little energy when working for the white man, he will work hard enough for himself when the fit takes him; and if not, he can set his slaves, his wives, to work for him. The crops, also, to which he confines his attention are those which are best suited to the soil and climate—are raised with least trouble, and in greatest quantities—and are therefore in the greatest general demand; the very same to which the ordinary settler must look for the chief means of support. And it is here that the competition is most keenly felt.

In looking over the accounts of our different colonies, one cannot help being struck with the regularity with which the same fallacies, attended with the same results, are repeated, as if it were not worth while to try another plan, with a view to a happier issue. In the case of New Zealand, the parallel is so exact, that the very words in which it is described will apply, without alteration, to the question before us. Mr. Hursthouse, in his excellent work on New Plymouth, speaking of the native, says—"Hitherto it has been found difficult to induce the natives to work for hire." And his intelligent reviewer continues—"The author hopes that they will improve in this particular as they advance in civilization. It seems to us that, as they can have land for nothing, civilization is not likely to teach them the advantage of working for themselves, unless in such cases as the government roads at Wellington, where they are paid high wages for very little work!"* And Mr. Power, whose authority I have before had occasion to cite, speaks still more to the point. Discussing the chances of a settler in New Zealand, he concludes—"There is another competitor, too, coming into the field, against whom there will be no contending, as he gets the pick of the land for nothing, and has plenty of cheap labour at command. This is the Maori." Can analogy give stronger confirmation than this?

Such was the state of things which greeted Mr. West, the first Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, on his arrival in December, 1845; the tone of his despatches, as well as those of Sir Peregrine Maitland, the Cape Governor of that day, betraying but too evidently the despondent view which they took of the prospect before them. They are the writings of men at once perplexed and alarmed; and no wonder—for the skein which they had to unravel was too tightly knotted to yield to gentle means, and the clue was held in other hands. Urgent appeals for an increased military force were met by suggestions for the formation of a native militia; and a despairing hint at the necessity for abandoning the colony elicited an essay on the influence which the *civilization of the refugee* Zulus would have in the diffusion of Christianity throughout south-eastern Africa, and the proposal of a general survey.

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* "Sidney's Emigrant Journal." Second Series. Page 194.

Meanwhile the black swarm daily increased, till the danger became so imminent, that it was plain something must be done. The first proposition was natural enough;—Turn them out! But this, on mature consideration, was found to be no such easy task. The stream which, in its infancy, had been guided and controlled by the Boers, had now swelled to an overwhelming torrent, whose waters might, indeed, find deposit in various reservoirs, but which, to turn aside, was as great a work as the drainage of the Haerlem Lake. There were other obstacles, too, in the way. Having once admitted the claims of these refugees on our protection, we could not abandon them to the tender mercies of the tyrant from whose oppression they had escaped; if, therefore, we expelled them from our borders, a tract must be found for their occupation; and this could not be accomplished without encroaching either on the private property of individuals, or on the territories of our independent neighbour, Faku, with whom we had generally been on amicable terms.

It being decided that they could not be expelled, the next question was, how to provide for their management and efficient control; for, the absurdity of allowing upwards of 100,000 natives to remain in the district "without any law whatsoever actively operating upon them," was too obvious to require pointing out. Indeed, this question had begun to occupy the minds of the authorities as early as 1843, when, in the able report already quoted, the following suggestions had been made by Mr. Cloete:—

"That the natives should be considered as divided into two separate classes, viz., those who formed a part of the original inhabitants of the soil, and the Zulu immigrants. That with regard to the former, certain tracts of land should be unalienably vested in the chiefs of the different kraals or villages, in trust, for the use of all the inhabitants of such kraals, as tenants in common. In regard to the latter, that they should be gathered into a certain number of distinct locations under the superintendence and direction of the missionaries, some of whom were established in different parts of the country, and one of whom, Dr. Adams, had already from ten to twelve thousand *nominally* under his guidance."

Taking these suggestions, which had now been three years under consideration, as the ground-work of their plan, it was at length resolved that some decisive steps should be taken; and a committee of five was appointed, consisting of the Surveyor-General, the Diplomatic Agent, two American missionaries, and a Lieutenant of Royal Engineers, to devise the best means of carrying this important project into immediate execution.

Their report, which appeared in 1847, and which sets forth at large, and very clearly, their views on the subject in question, is, as might be expected from the well known talents and high characters of its authors, a most valuable document; and, if the plan which they proposed was a little too elaborate in its details, or too perfect—so to speak—in its arrangements, most assuredly it was not only the very best that could have been devised, but the only one which could ensure the continued peace and order of the coloured population, and, consequently, the permanent safety and prosperity of the colony. I regret extremely that my limits will not permit me to print more than a rough outline of this truly sensible, as well as clever, report, which, inclosed in the ominous blue cover, and lying concealed among the voluminous pages of the parliamentary annals of 1848, is too likely to escape general notice. Its main points are as follows. After stating the causes which led to this vast immigration, the probable number of natives resident within the colony, the very limited proportion of white inhabitants, and the critical position in which they were placed; after alluding to the lawless state of the coloured population, freed as they were from the restraint of the most despotic of despotic governments, for which as yet no other efficient law or authority had been substituted, it goes on to propose that each of the locations, to which the natives were to be removed, should be governed by a superintendent or local magistrate.

That he should be furnished with one or more assistants, according to the size of his location.

That upon each location a native police force should be established under an European police officer, &c.

That the resident agent should have authority to punish summarily minor criminal offences, and to decide upon civil disputes to a certain extent, after which there should be an appeal to the Diplomatic Agent, who should have power to dispose of them, *as much as possible to the principles of the British law*, the object being, that by degrees *the whole may be brought under one code.*

That all serious criminal trials be at once referred to the supreme court of the district.

That a complete registration should be made of all natives on each location, man, woman, and child, with the number of cattle possessed by each.

That their laws as to marriage and divorce be remodelled, and be made more strict (this is very important, as the doing away with polygamy would tend to make them more dependent on their own personal labour).

The establishment of schools and missions is strongly recommended as a supplementary aid on each location ; but the employment of missionaries as superintendents or magistrates was not contemplated by the commissioners; indeed, I have reason to believe, it was discountenanced.

Speaking of the expense, it goes on to say, that " though the sum required for such a system of management may appear large, yet, when the circumstances of the natives themselves, the vast capabilities of the district, and the relative positions of the white and black populations within it, are considered, the conclusion must be arrived at that the system for the government of the natives, to be efficient, *must be complete in all its details :* that the persons through whose instrumentality it is to be worked must be such, as by their characters furnish a guarantee for success : that to secure such persons respectable salaries are necessary, and sufficient assistance from inferior officers, to be appointed to each location, indispensable." "We are deeply impressed," add the commissioners, " with the conviction, that unless such a plan of government as this is established over the natives, and that *speedily*, the consequence to the district at large will be disastrous in the highest degree. To preserve them obedient subjects they require constant and steady control, and strictly impartial justice, both in the redress of their wrongs and the punishment of their misdemeanours," &c.

The reader will observe that in all this, the important point kept in view, is the entire subjection of the Kafir to white authority, and the gradual abolition of his own *national* laws and usages, the only means whereby a native population can be safely retained (if they can be retained at all) in close contact with European settlers.

Unfortunately the treasury of Natal was in no condition to provide the funds necessary for carrying these proposals into effect. The import dues, collections, &c., were little more than sufficient to pay the salaries of those employed in collecting them; exports there were none; the native tax was as yet only an idea; the sale of crown lands, the never-failing recipe for colonial embarassment, scarcely formed an item on the credit side of the account; and as to pecuniary assistance from the mother country:—if the object had been to colonize a barren island in the South Seas, or to send squadrons to broil on the Line, under pretence of putting down the slave trade—to establish a naval station on an iceberg, or to transport a ready-made English city to the plains of Australia or New Zealand—the money would have been forthcoming at once; but for such a simple common-place purpose as the protection of English emigrants, even for the pet colony of the office, it was absurd to expect it for a moment.

Lord Grey, of course, saw this at a glance; but he also saw and acknowledged the value of the commissioners' suggestions, and felt that his refusal to sanction the scheme before him, entailed upon him the obligation of supplying another which should be equally efficient, more profitable, less costly, and therefore more suited to the means of an infant community. The plan devised by his Lordship was at least an ingenious one, and has so far answered its purpose that, in the hands of the most skilful and judicious agents, and worked with the most consummate tact and management, it has almost attained the reputation of a successful measure. Its main principle was, that the Kafirs should be governed by their own laws, and through their own chiefs, whose authority was to be directed, not controlled, for the maintenance of order. But we will hear the despatch speak for itself:

"It should be expressly declared to the inhabitants of Natal that, in assuming the sovereignty of the district, the Queen has not interfered with or abrogated any law, custom, or usage prevailing among them antecedently to the British rule, save only such laws customs, or usages, as are abhorrent from, and opposed to the general principles of humanity and decency recognized throughout the whole civilized world: and further, that the Queen has not interfered with or abrogated the powers which the law, custom, and usage of the inhabitants vested in the chiefs or in any persons in authority among them, but that in all transactions between themselves, and in all crimes committed by any of them against the persons or property of those of their own race, the natives will be permitted to administer justice toward each other, as they had been used to do in former times. This implies that some control should be exercised over the chiefs, in order to restrain them from those acts of cruelty which are so common among savages, but which cannot be tolerated even among them while living under the protection of a civilized nation."

This control, which might have proved, and indeed, under Mr. Shepstone's management, has hitherto proved, the safety-valve of this dangerous measure, is immediately so limited as to be merely nominal. It is not to impair the power of the chiefs in any way, or to prevent their maintaining a strong authority. The manner in which the chiefs govern their tribes is not to be minutely inquired into, even though much oppression, and the commission of many acts highly repugnant to our notions of justice and humanity, should be the consequence; even the power of inflicting capital punishment to be restrained rather than altogether taken away; and, in short, the only interference that appears to be contemplated is—the prohibition of any punishment on people accused of witchcraft or neglect of religious observances.

This is the substance of the despatch; the rest contains nothing new or remarkable, unless we except the Kafir tax, a most necessary and unexceptionable measure; the enrolment of a native militia on a large scale; and the establishment of a body of pensioners at Maritzburg, which was not encouraged by Sir Harry Smith. I should add that the principle of governing natives through their chiefs was approved of by the gallant Baronet, who cited the success which had attended a similar experiment in Kafirland, a success which we can now estimate at its real value.

Before I go on to state the reception which this despatch met with in Natal, I must put the reader in possession of one or two important facts which must not be overlooked.

In the first place, chieftainship had long virtually ceased to exist among the refugee Zulus in Natal. The system, unsupported by constitutional right or physical force, had died a *natural* death; and if Lord Grey's proposal were to be adopted, would have not to be maintained, but to be revived, or, to use a still stronger expression, created anew. Secondly, all the authority which had formerly been exercised over the natives by their own chiefs had been by themselves voluntarily transferred to the white man, and was centred in the person of Mr. Shepstone, who, under the anomalous title of Diplomatic Agent, and rather by general consent than under any definite appointment, had discharged, and was still discharging all the functions of judge and ruler amongst them, settling their disputes, punishing their misdemeanors, and wanting only a confirmed and duly recognized office, an increased staff, and very little additional means at his command, to reduce them to perfect and unconditional obedience to his administration. As it was, he had succeeded almost to a miracle, and few ventured to dispute his power. Now, it is very evident that the first effect of the proclamation of the decree above quoted would be to destroy the prestige of Mr. Shepstone among the natives, and to undo all the good which he had effected. "Let well alone," is a sterling though homely adage, and if want of funds prevented an advance in the right direction, there was, at all events, no reason for a retrograde movement,—of all steps the most dangerous.

In the colony there was but one feeling on the subject—a feeling of extreme dissatisfaction and disappointment—and this was expressed in words too clear to be misunderstood. We have the recorded opinions of Mr. Cloete and Mr. Shepstone, confirmed by the consent of the whole executive council of Natal, that the promulgation of the ordinance would be ruinous to the peace and prosperity of the colony; and the land commissioners appointed to select the sites of the different locations, went so far as to say that "if the declaration to be made by His Honour were to have the effect of giving to the natives greater power than they now enjoy, the locations, *not being so situated as to prevent an intermixture of the natives with the white population*, would be liable to serious objection; and that in this case it would be advisable to take into consideration the practicability of removing the bulk of the natives beyond the Umzinkulu" (the south-west boundary of Natal). And Mr. Cloete, among the immediate effects of the proclamation, enumerates the following:—

"1*st*, It will produce on the minds of the emigrant farmers a feeling, which is but too prevalent already, that the natives will be subject to laws and regulations, securing to them greater rights and privileges than are possessed by the generality of the inhabitants; the effect of which will be, to produce, and keep alive, a spirit of disaffection towards the government, and of hostility towards the natives, which cannot but become detrimental to the interests of the latter.

2*dly*, That the natives, and more particularly their petty chiefs, will become impressed with the belief that her Majesty intends to acknowledge their entire independence from all our laws, as they will have some difficulty in comprehending the exception made as to offences against humanity; the effect of which will be to set up their own authority in direct opposition to that of the Government," &c.

These arguments, which need no comment of mine, joined to many others equally cogent, had, and most justly, so much weight with the Lieutenant-Governor and council of Natal, that they came to the unanimous decision, that the announcement of any change in policy, with regard to the natives, should be deferred; and accordingly things continued as they had done before, and might have done so to this day, but for an event which occurred some months afterwards.

Mr. Shepstone, in the exercise of his anomalous functions, having visited, June, 1849, a case of murder among the natives* with the punishment of a fine, this was regarded by the Recorder as an encroachment on the jurisdiction of his court (the colony being all under the Dutch Roman law), and, a dispute arising, the Lieutenant-Governor, as the only means of preventing the recurrence of such an uncomfortable affair, gave immediate force to the edict, which, while it freed the Kafir from the trammels of British law, left to Mr. Shepstone a *quasi* authority over the newly-created chiefs, which he has since done his utmost to preserve: and it is his greatest praise that notwithstanding the difficulties of his position, he has so far succeeded, that though war has now raged on the frontier for a year, all is, as yet, quiet in Natal. Still his influence, though considerable, is not what it was, when he was without a rival in the eye of the native:* and even were it undiminished, a system which depends entirely for success upon the ability of one man, and which must fall with him, has little to recommend it.

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* I do not remember the particulars of this crime; but the punishment does appear hardly adequate to the offence. The Recorder had always been a strenuous supporter of

Fortunately, we have another reason to be hopeful. Mr. West died in the autumn of 1849, and was succeeded by the present Lieutenant-Governor, Mr. Pine, a gentleman who, while his views are those of a sensible and unprejudiced man, has, at the same time energy and resolution to carry them into practice. He has many obstacles to contend against,—want of cordial co-operation, both in the colony and at home; want of men to work with, and of means to pay them. This last deficiency may indeed be to some extent supplied by the tax of seven shillings per hut, levied on the native population, which has been in most instances collected without difficulty, and which, though it has completely failed in its anticipated effect of compelling the Kafirs to labour, is still a welcome addition to the hitherto scanty revenue. It produced, the first year of its trial,

Mr. Shepstone's authority; and the case must have been a strong one, which elicited the expressions which he is reported to have used on the occasion. The fact is, however, that the forms of the Dutch Roman law are quite as unsuited to our Zulu subjects as their own. What is required is a code, at once simple and severe, admitting neither of doubtful interpretation or delay, and administered solely and immediately by the Diplomatic Agent and his colleagues.

† For this assertion I have the authority of Mr. Shepstone himself, he having informed me, in a conversation which I had with him, the morning before my departure from Natal, that unless his staff were greatly increased, he could not answer for the continued preservation of order among the natives.

£3600; but, by this time, it ought to yield an income of fully three times that amount.

Another important step has been the appointment of magistrates to some of the Kafir locations, who, by their activity and determination, have done much to check the growing insolence of the natives. More will doubtless be added as fit men can be found. This is all in the right direction, and Mr. Pine would doubtless go further had he the power; for the steady uniformity with which he has always lent his support to uphold the authority of the Diplomatic Agent, and the decisive manner in which his influence has always been thrown into the scale, when prompt and stern measures have been required, are quite sufficient proofs that he knows both the critical position of the vessel under his charge, and the only course to be steered with safety.

But neither Mr. Pine's energy, nor Mr. Shepstone's skill, can do more than delay the catastrophe, unless the fatal edict which emanated from a higher quarter than theirs, be reversed.

It is a notorious fact that the Zulus are growing daily more and more independent, more and more dangerous. No longer tractable and suppliant refugees, they are gradually consolidating themselves into a rich and powerful nation (*imperium in imperio*), and already begin to treat their preservers on equal terms. This equality cannot be of long duration.

With Panda on one border, and Faku on the other, with Boers and Bushmen, and a host of rebel tribes on the west, and the sea closing her in on the eastern side, Natal had need be whole and sound, if she is to maintain her existence as a British colony—much more, if she is to turn her vast and undisputed resources to account. No Œdipus is required to solve her riddle. Two nations are struggling within her; one must give way. Which shall it be? It is to be earnestly hoped that the new colonial minister will see these matters in their true light, and will not suffer the youngest and most promising of Britain's daughters to be strangled in her very cradle, the last offshoot from the parent tree to be choked by poisonous weeds, or a single tiny rosebud to fall from the chaplet that forms the noblest ornament on the brows of our gracious Queen.

CHAPTER XIV.

NIGHT MUSIC—A FULL HAYCOCK—ZULU KRAAL—IMPLEMENTS—ARTS—ORNAMENTS—PETTY LARCENY—WARE SJAMBOK—HONOUR AMONG THIEVES—WATERED HONEY—ZINGOLLI—A ROYAL RECEPTION—SMOKING—NO CHANGE—LIKE MASTER LIKE MAN—ONE GROOM—LITTLE BIT—EDGE-TOOLS—LANGUAGE—ORATORY—MIMICRY—DIFFICULTIES OF CONVERSION—POLL—SPECIOUS RESULTS OF MISSIONARYT EACHING—NEED OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE—DANGER OF PET ESTABLISHMENTS.

It was, I think, about three days after my first arrival in Maritzburg that I was sitting in the mud-floored parlour of Balcony House, inditing a letter to friends in England, and in that dreamy mood when external sounds and objects blend fantastically with the thoughts within, and, though present to the senses, carry no real impression to the mind, when I became gradually conscious of a deafening noise, which I at first took for the howling of a pack of wolves; but it lacked the prolonged and mournful cadence of the note, if note it could be called; and besides, it appeared to be stationary, and very near.

My next thought was a more natural and alarming one. I seized my cap, and hurried out to solve the mystery.

It was a lovely evening (the evenings always are lovely in Natal, except when it rains); the moon was just coming up behind a bank of clouds, "with a star or two besides," and shed a dim drowsy light on the quaint objects around—just enough to bring the white walls of the scattered houses into strong relief, and to cause an occasional sparkle on the surface of the tiny brook by the street side. But for that, the wide market-place opposite might have been a lonely wilderness, so still and quiet was the night, so little appearance was there of human habitation.

Could that noise be human which still continued to echo in my ears, and which seemed not only to come from the bowels of the earth at my feet, but to be multiplied in fainter repetitions at greater distances on every side? As I was lost in idle conjecture, E—— joined me on the *stoep*, and, to my increased surprise, entered into quiet conversation, as if there was nothing extraordinary going on. Dreading that I was under the influence of some enchantment, I determined to ascertain at once its nature, and, summoning courage, asked my host whence, and from what kind of beings, these unearthly yells might proceed.

"Whether from man or beast," said E——, "is more than I can tell you; but the noise comes from that hut yonder, and is caused by Behren's Kafirs, and a most confounded row they are making. I believe a law is to be made to stop the nuisance. But perhaps you would like to look in upon them at their orgies; I can promise you it is a sight worth seeing."

We accordingly bent our steps to the hut, which was not twenty paces from our door, in the court-yard of the next house; I had hitherto taken it for a large haycock. As we approached it, however, I discovered a low doorway, or rather square opening, not quite two feet in height, through which something was exhaled, which was certainly not the smell of hay, while my ears convinced me that I had found the *whereabouts*, at all events, of the noise by which I had been so thoroughly awakened.

Two senses were fully satisfied, without further trial; but when, stooping low, or rather lying flat on my face, I peered cautiously into the orifice, I could scarcely refrain from an exclamation of momentary terror at the sight that presented itself. In the centre of the hut, though the night was close and sultry, a few red embers served rather to increase the general darkness, than to dispel it, and created an atmosphere in which the process of respiration appeared almost a miracle. Around it, as far as the eye could distinguish, in a regular circle, a group of naked figures were squatted in that peculiar position which none but a Kafir, or the India rubber man of circus celebrity can assume; their bronzed faces set between their knees, as if the head had no other support, and had been removed from its ordinary fixture on the shoulders, for the sake of frolic or a change of posture. Had they been motionless they might have been taken for the carved representations of heathen deities, that disfigure the walls of Hindoo temples; nay, their very movements, which were incessant, seemed the results of some internal machinery artfully contrived, rather than the spontaneous exertion of muscular force. The whole body, with the exception of the feet, was jerked up and down, and swayed from side to side, slowly or rapidly, in perfect time with the monotonous song or chant, while the snorting which at intervals accompanied the music, and the perspiration, which streamed down their sides like rain, showed that their amusement, like that of their civilized brethren, was in reality very severe toil. If they would but work with half the spirit on the mealie plot, or the cotton plantation, Natal would not be long a wilderness!

But I cannot say that any such utilitarian thoughts entered my head at the time. I was dreaming again, and my dreams recalled the pictures which, as a child, I had often painted to myself, asleep or awake, of the Evil One, and his abode (a subject, by-the-by, which is more frequently present to a child's imagination than their parents and governesses wot of). Black devils and blue, white devils and grey, with horns, and tails and pincers, and all the horrid apparatus that the Nursery Witch loves to conjure up before her trembling victim, danced before my eyes; all the diabolical legends I had ever heard, from St. Dunstan and his tongs, down to the strange man who met a farmer, as he was returning from church, and provoked him to a wrestling match, but, finding he had the Prayer-Book in his pocket, went off, as the man himself assured me, in "a flame of smoke;" these and many others flitted before me, and "surely," said I at length, "if ever such absurd ideas could be realized, are they not realized here? Is a single feature wanting to complete, on a small scale, the vulgar notion of an 'Inferno?' Fire, smoke, darkness, black figures, grinning faces, hideous distortions, horrid yells! As to the brimstone the less said the better:—

> 'I dare do all that may become a man,
> Who dares do more, is none.'

"But if, as chemists tell us, human beings require a certain proportion of oxygen and nitrogen to support life, those who rejoice in an atmosphere in which the latter gas so decidedly preponderates, may be fairly reckoned under the second category defined by the poet; and so the case of the poor Kafir is syllogistically sealed."

But I was again awakened, this time by a gentle tap on the shoulder.

"How many of those fellows do you think there are inside," asked E——, who had been awaiting the end of my soliloquy with exemplary patience.

"About ten, as far as I can guess," replied I, "the hut cannot hold more."

"We shall soon see," returned E——, "for here comes the Baas to turn them out, and high time, too."

As he spoke, our neighbour came up, flourishing a sjambok in menacing mood.

"The rascals," said he, "have taken a particular fancy to my premises; I verily believe half the Kafirs in the town are here. I'll soon have them out, however;" and without further word, he dived into the hole and disappeared. The noise instantly ceased; there was a sound of many feet, a smack or two, not very loud, and then a black head appeared at the aperture. One bound, and a tall native stood beside me; the drops on his skin glistering in the moonlight, his white teeth grinning very good-humouredly, and, on the whole, looking a very amiable devil, considering how unceremoniously he had been disturbed in a favourite occupation. Another and another! ten, twelve, fifteen! More yet! I had heard of the man who pulled a carpet out of one pocket, and a horse, saddled and bridled, out of the other; but that was, as a Yankee would say, a mere circumstance compared to this. To be short, I counted thirty-five of them, all strapping fellows too, make their exit from that one hollow haycock; and they did not look at all hot, or uncomfortable. Human beings, indeed!

But the song; yes, I had forgotten the song; it was all about cows: the only subject which, in the absence of war, ever enters into their thoughts. I managed to catch the first line and the chorus, which I offer as a specimen. I am afraid the notes must be left to the taste of the reader:—

"Inconyama puza manzi,
Hei tchi, tchi!"[*]
(All the calves are drinking water).

So much for the Kafir's town-house, where, like his betters in large cities, he is rather pressed for room. His country-seat is a very different affair. A Zulu kraal is built in circles like those of a target. The centre may be very appropriately called the "bull's eye," since it is devoted to the cattle. It is inclosed by a high wattle fence, not unlike our sheep hurdles, where wood is to be got, and a Kafir has more than one reason for preferring the neighbourhood of bush, if he has the choice; in the upper parts of the country, stone is more frequently used. The space between this and the outer inclosure is occupied by the huts, at equal distances from each other. The Zulu has a good eye for proportion, and is as precise in the arrangement of his kraal, as you, gentle reader, may be about that of the flower beds in your front garden. Not a blade of grass, nor a weed is to be seen in this ring, which is kept clean as the door-step of a citizen. Around each hut a little gutter is dug, to carry off the excessive rains; and no loose wood, straw, or any other combustible matter is allowed to accumulate in its neighbourhood, for fear of danger from an opposite element.

The garden of pumpkins, mealies, or Kafir corn, is most probably securely hedged, while that of his white neighbour is, ten to one, quite unprotected. A troop of villainous curs yelp about the establishment; I could never divest myself of a suspicion that they served for food.

The housekeeping utensils, though few and simple, evince considerable ingenuity. There are earthen jugs and pots of all shapes and sizes, only requiring a little glaze to make them really pretty;

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[*] In the written Kafir language, the vowels, by general consent of the missionaries and others, who have devoted themselves to the subject, are sounded respectively as in the Italian and Spanish:—*u*, oo; *i*, ee, and so on.

spoons of wood and horn, neatly and sometimes elaborately carved; the grass mat which forms their bed I have already noticed; and a basket of the same material, which I brought home with me, has attracted universal admiration, for the closeness and excellency of its fabric.

But the Zulu is not only a potter, a carver, and a basket-maker, he is also a smelter of iron, and a smith, and from the native ore, which is abundant, he contrives to make the rude hoe or pick, with which he turns up the soil; the needle or skewer, for sewing together his scanty clothing; and the blade or point of his assegai. The pick and the needle are now superseded by English manufacture; but for the war and the chase, the Zulu prefers to rely on the work of his own hands,—experience having taught him the great inferiority of the Birmingham trash, with which he was supplied, at not much more than twenty times its value.

I must not omit the pillow, which consists of a flat and very narrow surface, slightly hollowed to receive the head, and supported by two feet, cut out of one block of hard wood, and occasionally ornamented either by carving or partial burning. I tried it once, and did not care to do so again.

Among all nations there is some distinguishing mark, some change of habit or costume, to express the entrance on what, according to Shakespere, may be called the third stage of life. The Englishman lengthens his coat; the Yankee marries; the Indian leaves on his head nought but the solitary scalp tuft, ready for the grasp of his mortal foe; the Australian knocks out a couple of his front teeth The Kafir *umfane* (boy) when he becomes an *indola* (man), shaves his head, and *sews* into the scalp a circular coronet of reeds, about half-an-inch thick, and rising about the same height above the skin. How it is managed I know not; but it is quite black and smooth, and has the appearance of a thick whip-lash.

The ornaments of either sex, the bead necklaces, copper armlets and anklets, and girdles of plaited grass, cow-hide, or nuts strung on the sinews of animals; these have too often been described to require more than a passing allusion. There is a fashion in these matters, as well as in silks and muslins; and the large blue bead which was the rage last season, may this year be thrown aside for the small red and white, which will, in their turn, become useless lumber in the wagon-chest of the trader. This fastidiousness is probably the sign of a complete revolution in native trade,—not that they evince the slightest tendency to the adoption of European clothing, which only chafes and annoys them, but that they begin to judge every article by the value in which it is held by the white man, and to reject those which he esteems lightly as worthless. On this principle, they have lately taken a great fancy to steel in any shape, as I found to my cost, having lost no less than six curb-chains, one after the other, in as many weeks.

The fact is that the Kafir has, for some time, made the discovery that, next to cattle and wives, a certain number of threepenny pieces (the prevailing form of small change current in Natal) is the most desirable of possessions; and nothing which is not readily convertible into *mali*, or hard cash, has now much attraction for him. The most obvious result of this universal knowledge of good and evil, has been, to multiply his temptations to commit petty thefts, a crime from which he was once singularly exempt. He lifted cattle like our own ancestors, and kidnapped women like the Romans of old; but as it is recorded of a celebrated highway robber, that he indignantly repelled the charge of stealing a pocket handkerchief, so the Kafir had the reputation of disdaining petty larceny. This is not the case now, and I should seriously advise intending emigrants to take boxes with locks and keys, and to keep them carefully closed, if they wish to preserve their tobacco, their sugar, or still more the little knick-knacks, which, though of no real worth, are often the most highly prized of their possessions. Summary punishment is the only remedy for this growing evil, the Kafir being not only entirely destitute of moral feeling, but lacking even the Spartan sense of shame at detection. Here is an instance. I had dismounted one day, accompanied by a friend, at the door of a shop, leaving the horses according to custom standing outside, with the ends of their bridles fastened together. We had scarcely entered when a tall native lounged in and offered a sjambok for sale. As I happened to be in want of one, I asked the price, and soon agreed to buy it for the moderate sum of sixpence. It was very cheap; but the Kafir seemed mightily pleased with his bargain, and showed his teeth in a series of grins, as he proceeded leisurely to deposit the tiny coin in a curious purse, consisting of rolls of leather, rag, and other materials, one within the other, very carefully folded and tied, and which appeared to contain at least a dozen half-crown pieces, besides silver of smaller dimensions. While he was thus occupied, my friend, who had been busily engaged at the other end of the store, joined me, and as he was an old colonist I called his attention to my new purchase, asking whether it was not well worth the money?—the Kafir grinning all the while. My friend took the sjambok in his hand, and examined it for a second.

"Yes," said he, "it is decidedly cheap, for it cost me two shillings last week, and it hung in the girth-strap of my saddle yonder five minutes ago."

The Kafir now slunk towards the door, still grinning however; and, when stopped and questioned, met us with a cool and impudent denial, nor was it till, with a decision little expected, my friend had seized and made him fast to the wheel of a neighbouring wagon, and given him ample cause to beware of meddling for the future with stray sjamboks, that he changed the grin into a whine, and proffered a restitution of the sixpence, which he extracted from his extraordinary purse, with a reluctance so truly miserly, that, notwithstanding all our efforts to look grave and dignified, as Judge Lynch ought to do, we could hardly refrain from a burst of laughter.

As a set-off against this, I will relate another anecdote, which tells rather more in the poor Kafir's favour, proving that the principle of "honour amongst thieves" is not confined to our own criminal heroes, who divide the palm in public estimation with warriors and statesmen, but that even among these humble tyros in crime it is held in high respect.

During my stay with Mr. Moffat, in the Sovereignty, and shortly after the arrival of Mr. M'Cabe, with his *vee*, the Kafir labourers belonging to the latter took it into their heads to decamp one night, having previously made a feast on two of their master's finest sheep. Among them was a native who had arrived that evening with a message from a neighbouring farm, and who, though present when the crime was committed, and probably a sharer in the feast, did not join in the subsequent flight, and was found on the spot the following morning.

When questioned by the enraged Baas, he asserted his entire ignorance of the whole affair; and even when tied up for punishment, though promised immediate release and free pardon, if he would confess all he knew of the matter, he refused to say a word which might inculpate his comrades, but underwent his penalty, which, though pretty severe, was no more than justice demanded, in perfect silence, and with a dogged stubbornness which might easily have been mistaken for heroism. Indeed, I was almost cheated into admiration myself.

Though his ideas on the subject of *meum* and *tuum*, are thus limited, the Kafir is nevertheless a clever and successful trader. Like the Jew, from whom he is often said to be descended (what nation has not, about whose origin there is any question at all?); he has a natural taste for commerce, and at a deal is not easily matched. One of his most common tricks is an affectation of innocent simplicity, under cover of which he will frequently pass off a studied *ruse* upon his unsuspicious customer. Nor is this talent confined to the male sex. While at Klip Spruit I had several opportunities of observing this; one instance I particularly remember.

Two *intombis* (unmarried girls) came one day to the hut with a pot of wild honey, which they offered for a shilling; it is generally a welcome dish on an African farm; but this was dry and waxy, and we rejected it accordingly. An hour afterwards the same fair damsels returned with another pot, containing, as they told us, some fresh honey, much better and more liquid than the last. And more liquid it certainly was, having been, as I at once detected, diluted with a plentiful proportion of water from the crystal *Umquehumba!* So true is it that there is nothing new under the sun! After escaping from London "sky blue," I had come to the other end of the world to buy watered honey! But when I reproached them for their dishonesty, one of the girls, putting on an air of would-be perplexity; asked me:—

"What I had to complain of? The white man was very hard to please; he said the honey was dry, and then he was angry because it was too wet."

There was no contending with such casuists, so I simply dismissed them, not without a fear that, like the Sibyls, they would make their appearance a third time, and with an article still more adulterated; but they did not repeat the experiment.

About five miles from Klip Spruit, on the banks of the Illova, dwelt Zingolli, one of the numerous petty chiefs, by whose aid, according to existing regulations, the Diplomatic Agent conducts the administration of his government. A very decent specimen of a Kafir chief was Zingolli, between whom and our host, the *groot Engelshman*, frequent interchanges of civility, and neighbourly intercourse, used to take place. Seldom did a week pass without our receiving a visit from his Majesty's henchman, a sedate, dignified man, mounted on a pack-ox, and carrying a long Birmingham fowling-piece, in defiance of all rules or ordinances to the contrary. Entering the hut with the usual salutation of "*Saga bona Inkos*," he would seat himself on the ground close to the door, and proceed to deliver his errand, which was sure to be a request for some trifle or other, of which his Majesty stood in need,—a little coffee, or sugar, or tobacco, or a bit of calico, or an old shirt. On one occasion the chief wanted a box in which to keep his money, of which he had a good store, partly accumulated by the sale of cows and produce; but mainly collected from his subjects in the shape of tribute. In return for these favours we occasionally received a jar of honey; and after harvest-time sundry pots of *utshuala*, a fermented liquor, made from the grain of the *amabale*,* or Kafir corn, of a light chocolate colour, sharp, yet pleasant to the taste, and very wholesome. The brewing of this beer, which takes place as soon as the crop is gathered, is celebrated with a great feast, at which there is an extra quantity of singing and dancing, such as I have already described, and a little intoxication; though in this last respect the Kafir, to do him justice, is still far behind the white colonist;—if he remain long so, it will not be, alas! for want of example.

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* Though I have elsewhere given the name of "millet" to this Kafir corn, I am by no means sure that I am right in so doing; its grain is very small, reddish brown, and resembles rape-seed more than anything else.

Zingolli sometimes paid us the compliment of a visit in *propriâ personâ*, laying all ceremony aside, and dropping in, in a friendly way, generally about dinner-time. He prided himself on his knowledge of European habits, and would not only sit at table, and handle his knife and fork like a Christian, but really appeared at his ease while doing it. He gave us many a pressing invitation to his kraal; but the report which our man gave of the road thither was so unfavourable, that it was long before we summoned courage to try it; at length, however, partly because we feared offending his Majesty, and partly tempted by the prospect of a day's fishing in the Illova, we resolved to accomplish the journey. The distance was but five miles,—but such miles; up and down perpendicular hills, across marshy *vleis* filled with a thick forest of crackling reeds, over loose stones that slipped from beneath the feet, or against which, hidden in the long grass, the unwary pedestrian struck with a force that shook his whole frame, and perhaps threw him head foremost to the ground! The last descent was nothing but a series of stumbles, some of which might well have produced worse results than the burst of laughter which invariably followed them. We reached the bottom, however, without any untoward accident, and were well rewarded by the lovely scene that awaited us.

At our feet flowed the crystal stream of the Illova, its waters sparkling when they caught the rays of the sun, but elsewhere dark with the reflection of the wooded heights that hemmed the narrow gorge into which we had dived. Between the bank and the foot of the precipice, nestled in among clumps of scrubby but picturesque underwood, was the kraal of our host, who gave us a right royal welcome, and quartered us in one of his best and cleanest huts. I need not describe the feast, which consisted of beef, Kafir corn, mealies, and *utshuala*, eked out with some coffee, and a few other European luxuries, for which Zingolli fancied he had acquired a taste. But for the benefit of the respectable community of smokers, of which I am myself an ancient member, I will describe a method of inhaling the delicious poison, with which even the most experienced among them may possibly be unacquainted, and which is certainly omitted by Byron in his celebrated address to tobacco, in which, after enumerating all the forms which it is made to assume, he gives his preference, very erroneously, as I think, to the cigar.

In the first place, the Kafir does not smoke tobacco; Zingolli himself did, because he was a chief; but his subjects inhale the fumes of the *dakka*, a tall plant, which I imagine to be (but do not stake my botanical reputation upon it), a species of wild hemp; and this is the way in which they use it:—in the outer side of a moderate-sized cow-horn (I say moderate, since many horns in Natal are four or five feet in length), a small hole is bored, into which a hollow reed is closely fitted; the horn is then filled with the weed and lighted, and the Kafirs, sitting in a circle, pass it round, each in his turn taking one long draw of several seconds duration at the mouth-piece. What becomes of the smoke I do not quite remember; but, the inhaling process concluded, the spitting begins, which is indeed the chief part of the entertainment. Ejecting their saliva in small circles on the floor, they proceed with their fingers, and the said choice material, to design various figures, and to scratch plans of kraals, camps, &c., chatting all the while, and evidently carrying on some game or contest, in which they take great interest. When the game is played out the marks are rubbed over, the horn is passed round, and the same elegant amusement recommences. I believe the intention is to exhibit a mock representation of a battle or cattle-lifting foray, and that it may be considered as the savage type of the refined and noble science of chess.

In these and other amusements the women take little part; indeed, a Kafir woman has but a wretched existence; before marriage she is kept like a piece of goods ticketed for sale, and ever after she is a drudge. No wonder she spends her wedding-day in tears. Some of the girls are perfect models of symmetry, graceful, light, and firm in carriage; but work soon tells upon them. As to their characters and habits it is the most painful view of the whole Kafir subject, and may as well be passed over in silence.

We stayed two nights in the glen, and had a most successful day's whipping in the Illova, catching two or three stone of fish, which, as we had brought salt with us, we were able to preserve for future consumption. I suppose the largest may have weighed about three pounds, but we lost several much larger, (what fisherman ever went out without hooking and losing some monster of fabulous size?), and with a net I have little doubt we might have filled a cart. As it was, we had quite enough to make the ascent of the first hill a Herculean labour; and had not our kind host sent a Kafir to relieve us of the burden, we might have stuck midway to this very hour.

As far as I saw of Zingolli's government he seemed to hold a gentle sway over his subjects, and to be in high favour amongst them. I have generally observed that the Kafirs throughout Natal appear attached to their chiefs (one of the best reasons, by the by, for doing away with the system altogether). My doctor, Jack, owed allegiance to one Goza, whom he was always extolling to the skies, but when I asked him why he respected him so much, his reply was, "Wow! Goza great gentleman, like Mister Fyvie; he got three horses." Divert the tribute money from the chief's pocket to the public treasury; make them poor, and their power ceases at once.

I have often spoken of the difficulties which the farmer finds in dealing with his native labourers; but I have omitted one, which is the cause of much annoyance. At the end of the month the Kafir expects his five shillings, and of course he generally gets it to the day. Sometimes, however, it happens that there is no silver on the farm, and then some such scene as this takes place. Boy enters the hut, and asks for his wages. The master, after convincing himself that five shillings cannot be collected among all the hands on the place, makes shift to explain the matter to Boy, who either does not, or will not understand. "He must be off to his kraal, and wants the money."

"But I have no change; if you will wait till so and so returns from the bay, you shall be paid."

Boy sits down in the corner of the hut, and ruminates for an hour or two, and then gives it as his opinion that it is quite impossible that an *Inkos Inkulu* (great chief) like the Baas, should have no money. To reassure him on this point, master shows him a sovereign, and explains (as well as he can) that it contains four times the value of his wages; but that he cannot turn it into shillings at a moment's notice. It is all in vain: Boy sits down again, sulky, and unconvinced, and seems likely to become a fixture in the hut; so he is at length kicked out, and probably starts off at once to his kraal, and tells how the Englishman cheated him out of his wages.

I did know one really good Kafir servant, and I must chronicle him. He was not a Zulu, but a frontier Gaika, and had lived with his master, a farmer in the Sovereignty, for many years. So devoted was he that he turned his talent of lying, a talent which these fellows excel in, to his master's service. I called there one day with the intention of buying a *trek* ox, and the farmer not being at home, his native servant, who spoke English fluently, took me to look at the herd. I fixed my eyes on a fine grey steer.

"Has he ever been broken to the yoke?" I enquired of my sable conductor.

"Yes," replied he: "he has trekked har op acht, in the young span every day."

The animal had never had a yoke on his neck, and I knew it; but such an instance of zeal for another's interest, on the part of a native, was worth a dozen oxen, and I could not find in my heart to be angry with him. "Like master, like man," says the proverb, so I took the hint, and went elsewhere for my purchase.

The Zulus are not generally handy about horses. Mount them, and they will ride anywhere; but woe betide the poor animal entrusted to their care. Klaas, our groom at Balcony House, was an exception to this rule. The boy delighted in horses, and was a natural jockey; and I verily believe, with a little training, would have made a successful *debût* in an English stable. His great delight was to go out in search of stray steeds, when he would take a quiet gallop before bringing them back. The cunning fellow always knew where to pitch upon each particular horse; but he knew also how to enhance his services by making the task appear more difficult than it really was. Schutkraal was a continued source of revenue to him. The old horse had no idea of confining himself to the Maritzburg *vlei*, having a natural instinct for smelling out the best pasturage within ten miles of the city. The consequence was that he was seldom forthcoming when wanted, and Klaas was despatched in search. After some hours he would come back with the news that Schutkraal was nowhere to be found. This would elicit the offer of a shilling as an encouragement, which generally had the desired effect; but, on one occasion, the rogue kept me in suspense for a fortnight, till at length, in despair, I rose the offer to a crown. That evening Schutkraal was in the stable.

E——'s remaining servant was " Bitji," or "little bit;" so called, I presume, on the principle of *lucus, â nón lucendo*, as he was a gigantic copper-coloured animal, but cheerful withal, and one who loved a dry joke in his way. During a severe illness which I had towards the end of my stay in Natal, Bitji performed many of the offices of a sick nurse, and the quiet tread of his naked feet was grateful to my excited nerves, as he moved about my little chamber. He had no idea, however, of paying all these delicate attentions for nothing, and had fixed on his reward; which was no other than an antique shooting-jacket, which was certainly no longer respectable for a decent citizen, and which Bitji thought might be transferred to him, without any great loss on my part. Now it so happens that I have an affection for an old jacket, faded and worn though it be, and that I had destined this one in particular, for my expeditions with the casting-net, and had cut off the buttons that they might not catch in the meshes; and, finally that I had another present in view for friend Bitji which, for reasons of my own, I reserved to a future period. But my nurse was not so easily put off; he had set his heart upon the jacket, and the jacket he would have. Morning, noon, and evening, in the parlour, in the passage, on the *stoep*, wherever he met me, I was always accosted with the very same words:—" *Mina sibenza Umlungu byna sick;*

nika Kafula baatje !" which compound of Dutch, English, and Zulu means—"I worked for white man when he was very sick; give the Kafir the jacket." I need scarcely add that his importunity succeeded.

In temper I should be rather inclined to call the Zulu phlegmatic than choleric; yet I have known several instances in which he has obeyed the sudden impulse of passion. I have known him, when struck, and but slightly, by his master, for some fault, seize his assegai, *(which as a rule he should never be permitted when in service to retain)*, and hurl it at the striker; fortunately he missed his aim, and before he could spring beyond its reach the long lash of the wagon-whip was playing about his legs with an effect that soon brought him to the ground whining for mercy. On another occasion, L——, the landlord at Uys' Doorns, being requested by a neighbouring farmer to send forward a young bull which the latter had just purchased, rode over to a kraal with a view of engaging a Kafir for the purpose. It was just at the time that the Zulu expedition was on foot, and there was a meeting of young warriors at the kraal who, on L——'s arrival, surrounded him, brandishing their newly-sharpened weapons, dancing, shouting, and gesticulating with a vehemence that was almost alarming.

At last, the point of an assegai grazing his cheek, he began really to doubt their intentions, and, on the impulse of the moment, seized the offending weapon by the shaft. The owner immediately snatched it away with an exclamation of anger, and in so doing drew the blade through L——'s hand, inflicting a severe and painful wound. I believe they were sorry or frightened at what they had done, and offered all the remedies in their power; but the fact is they are like children with edge tools, and should be very sparingly allowed to use them.

Perhaps half the misunderstandings which arise between the Zulu and the colonist may be traced to their mutual ignorance of each other's language. The magnitude of this evil has been felt nearer home; and it would be well if means could be taken for obviating it, by compelling the rising generation to speak English, which they readily learn to do, and letting the Zulu gradually fall into disuse, till, like the Hottentot tongue, it becomes obsolete and perishes. But till such a plan can be carried out, and it cannot be so long as chieftainship exists, there is no excuse for the almost total ignorance of the Zulu language, and the indifference as to acquiring it exhibited by the many otherwise intelligent emigrants. Now that it is reduced to writing, and that through the medium of the papers, as well as in cheap and useful vocabularies, every facility is offered to the student; a very little perseverance would enable any one of ordinary capacity to master it.

Though a poor it is not an ungraceful language; in sound it sometimes reminds one of the Spanish, and were it not for the indescribable clicks and the frequent recurrence of gutturals, it would be really mellifluous. Its chief peculiarities are the common prefix of *u*, or *uku*, to all infinitives, and the great majority of nouns; the formation of the genitive by the prefix of *w*, *y*, or *b*; of the dative and oblative by the addition of *eni* or *ini;* and of the plural number again by *ama* or *izi* prefixed. For example, *inhlu*, a house; *benhlu*, of a house; *enhluini*, to, or in a house; *izinhlu*, houses. The initial letters of words, and sometimes the terminals also are changed for the sake of euphony, which here means alliteration, to an almost endless variety. The pronoun *ako*, thy, has not less than eight of these variations—*sako*, *bako*, *lako*, *wako*, *yako*, *nako*, *zako*, and *kwako*. As a set-off against this torrent of *k's*, I will only mention the Zulu "good night," *lala cushla*, which recalls the *cushla machree* of the Irish, and the very sound of which is enough to ensure "pleasant dreams and slumbers light."

As might be expected, the chief strength of the language lies in the multiplicity of terms belonging to cattle; they are almost innumerable; not only every colour, but every possible manner in which any two colours may be found united in the same animal, having a distinct word to express it. In pronunciation the vowels are, with few exceptions, broad and full, and are independent of the surrounding consonants.

The natives generally express themselves very plainly, and make little use of metaphors, or other rhetorical ornaments, yet instances of almost poetical language are occasionally met with, sufficient to afford additional proof, if it were needed, of the close connection that subsists between the most refined and studied form of oratory, and the natural correct expression of the untutored mind.

> "Those rules of old discovered, not devised,
> Are nature still, but nature methodized."

In Panda's verbal despatches, whether to the Lieutenant-Governor or to other Kafir chiefs, these flights of eloquence frequently occur, especially when his majesty is in a complaining or threatening mood. Thus in a message to the late Mr. West, soon after the arrival of the latter, begging that his Aunt Mawa, who had taken refuge in Natal, should be delivered into his power, and complaining of the non-fulfillment of promises which had been made him on this subject, he says: "He (Panda) went to Major Smith, and found him a rock." And, again, "The feet of the messengers demanding redress and restoration, are worn out in vain,—no redress has been given." At another time Panda tells Langulabele, a petty chief, who had also thrown himself on our protection, that "he must plait for himself a rope that will raise him from the earth to avoid his vengeance; but that as long as he remains on its surface he cannot avoid it. He might think of assistance from the frogs (the English), but that this hope was also a vain one, as he would find to his cost." And to Putile, another object of his displeasure: "My great men only have gone to avenge themselves as yet; when I go I shall leave all *whitening*." Among Kafir accomplishments I must not forget to mention, that of being excellent mimics. In conversation they make plentiful use of gesture and action to illustrate their meaning, and in describing what they have witnessed they will represent each of the different characters that figured in it by some peculiarity of carriage, gait, or general appearance, caricatured indeed, yet so to the life as to be unmistakable. "Who was that passing up the street?" I asked one morning of Crapai, an independent intelligent lad (the two epithets generally go together when applied to Zulus), whom my friend C. Fyvie had lately engaged as his valet. For answer Crapai raised his arm, after the manner of an auctioneer's hammer, and in a tone which no dweller in Maritzburg could have failed to recognize, cried out, "Going for three and sixpence! No advance—gone." No clown in an English pantomime could have done it better; indeed there are some of these fellows who, if imported, would, without much teaching, make the fortune of a London theatre.

It may be easily supposed that this talent would be turned to ample account by a knot of young Englishmen, living in the same house, and sometimes rather put to it to find vent for their exuberant spirits. It is a bad plan to jest with a Kafir; he ought to be kept at a respectful distance, and taught to know his place. But what then? Fun must be had—*coute qui coute*. As the eldest in our little party at Balcony House (a quaint reason by-the-by) the seat at the bottom of the *table d'hôte*, with its questionable honours and arduous duties, had been assigned me. Being a near-sighted man, I discharged my task, which generally consisted in the dismemberment of a couple of tough ducks (nothing is tender in Natal), in a manner peculiarly my own, but which, from habit, I had long ceased to regard as singular. Our head waiter, Jack, it seems was of a different opinion; for, hearing an immoderate burst of laughter proceed one morning from the parlour, and naturally wishing to share in the entertainment, though without any suspicion of the cause, I entered, and discovered my gentleman seated gravely at the table before a large and enlightened audience, the carving knife and fork in his hands, and an imaginary duck before him, on which, with head on one side, and very much depressed, and eyes turned all manner of ways, he was performing sundry fantastic operations, by which the wretch intended to represent ——. I cut him short by a sound box on the ear, whereupon he ejaculated "Wow!" and fled to his own regions, stopping for a moment at the door to show his face distended with a grin of incorrigible impudence.

But my limits warn me that I can no longer delay to enter on a subject which I would fain escape altogether, for I can say nothing that is satisfactory or encouraging,—I mean the capabilities of the Zulu to receive permanent religious impressions, and the degree of success that may be reasonably expected to attend the efforts of those who devote themselves to his conversion. It is no pleasant task to damp the ardent hopes of zealous and enthusiastic spirits, or to cast the chill of discouragement upon the warm glow of active and untiring benevolence, ever seeking new objects for its attention, new spheres for its exercise and development; but it is to prevent these hopes from meeting with a late and bitter disappointment,—to guard this benevolence against misapplication or imposition, against wasting itself in fruitless endeavours, and sometimes even producing positive evil where most it wished to do good,—that the truth must be bared of all excrescence, and put in its stern simplicity before the public eye.

Speaking, then, from my own experience, and still more from the unbiassed opinions of those who have had far more opportunities than I have had of looking closely into this matter in all its bearings, I should unhesitatingly affirm the conversion of the Kafir, under any circumstances, to be next to an impossibility,—under the Missionary system, as it at present exists, utterly impossible.

Of Natural Religion, after much enquiry and some personal observation, I have never been able to discover more than the very faintest trace among the benighted people—so faint, indeed, that it needed a keen eye to detect it at all. Some few ceremonies they have in which ingenious minds have discovered a fancied resemblance to portions of the Mosaic institutions, and upon which they have tried very hard to build something like a tangible theory; but the foundation has proved too slender even for so unsubstantial an edifice. Of the religion which the French call *culte*,—of worship of any kind, whether in the form of idolatry or the acknowledgment of an Unseen Power—that is, of a merciful and beneficent Power—they have literally none. They pay respect to the manes of their chiefs, who, though dead, seem still to inspire them with a certain degree of fear; and they ascribe every event which passes their limited comprehension to the influence of magic. Hence they are the prey to designing conjurors, medicine-men, and false prophets, who lead them completely by the nose, and turn their superstition to the accomplishment of their own vile ends; hence, too, the present executions for supposed witchcraft, the horrible torture of the ant-heap, which I mentioned in an early chapter, and many other barbarities too hideous to relate.

But all these difficulties might easily be overcome; indeed, the mind of the Kafir being, as far as religion is concerned, a *rasa tabella*, it would seem the better calculated to receive and retain the great doctrines of Christianity: it is in his natural disposition that the insurmountable obstacle lies—in his secret heart, which is that of an irreclaimable savage—sullen, crafty, selfish, malignant, treacherous. His intellect may be cultivated to a certain extent, with considerable success. Like the parrot, he will readily repeat his lesson—nay, he will imitate, and naturally assume the tone of voice, the air and manner of his teacher; he will read his Testament, and sing psalms translated into his language by the indefatigable missionaries, with the true dolorous nasal twang of the conventicle; but in this very aptitude lies the great danger; that which is in reality but the clever acting of an accomplished mimic is too often taken as the evidence of a changed heart, and is quoted in support of a system which is not only inefficient but radically wrong.

An instance very much to the point occurs to me at this moment, which will illustrate far better than I can explain the nature of those superficial results, and the amount of faith which should be placed in them.

A Kafir servant having brought a note one evening to Balcony House, the loungers on the *stoep*, according to the bad habit prevailing amongst us, fell into conversation with him, and soon discovered that he had had the benefit of more instruction than usually falls to the lot of his kind. Needing no encouragement, he chattered away with easy familiarity, giving his opinion on various subjects, till at length he spoke of religion, and thus described his idea of the immortality of the soul. "When I die," said he, "*umzimba* (the body) *hamba* (go) so," (pointing to the earth)—"*Umoya* (the spirit—properly wind) so,"—and folding his hands together, he blew gently through them upwards, as signifying the flight of the immortal part to the realms above. Could anything be more beautiful or more striking? Would not the very recital of such a scene in dear credulous England have drawn tears from the eyes and money from the purses of listening multitudes? Would it not have been received as undoubted proof that the Kafir was not only a man of genius and a poet, but a sincere

Christian? Alas! alas! Boy was simply acting over again what his kind master or mistress had so prettily taught him; and some other parts of his conversation, which did not proceed from so pure a source, showed that his mind, like a mirror, reflected all images presented to it with equal fidelity, and retained them, as far as any good purpose was concerned, with a hold equally transient. In short, Boy was, morally speaking, a decided scamp.

There was once a parrot, which lived in a convent, and learned his *aves* and *credos*, and became so renowned for his devout character that people made pilgrimages from far and wide to see and converse with him. The abbess of a nunnery, of a superior and doubtless more wealthy order, had long set her eyes on this paragon of birds, and after many a fruitless negociation, became at length the happy purchaser, at an untold sum. So one fine morning, Poll was brought down to the convent-gate, and consigned, amid tears and lamentations, to the hands of a lay brother, who was charged, under pain of all sorts of penalties, to convey him by the canal-boat safe to his destination. Poll's last word, as he parted from his old friends, was "*Benedicite.*" But on the canal-boat the company was not quite so select; and before the exemplary bird had been there an hour he had begun to learn a new language, of a very different style to that which he had hitherto known, but which, under the auspices of an old bargeman, a travelling musician, and one or two other passengers of ambiguous character, he acquired so rapidly, that long before the end of his journey he was master of a complete vocabulary.

Arrived at his new abode, he was received with rapture; but what was the astonishment of the assembled sisters when Poll, perching upon the back of a chair, lifted his right claw to his beak, and with a knowing look, asked the abbess (in German—for it was in Germany this took place) whether her mother knew she was out! The effect may be imagined: but when this was followed by something more decidedly profane, and finally by a perfect torrent of what in England would be termed "Billingsgate," they decided that the bird was bewitched, and had recourse to exorcism und holy water. It was all in vain: poor Poll returned, indeed, occasionally to his ancient *rôle*, which he sustained with becoming gravity and decorum; but the lesson of the canal was never effaced, and one or the other was equally likely to be uppermost in his throat. So he fell into disgrace, and was soon ignominiously expelled the convent.

Now, the Kafir only differs from the parrot in that he has the tact to adapt his conduct and conversation to the circumstances and the people among which he finds himself; and therefore seldom falls into a similar scrape, otherwise the resemblance holds good in every particular. In short, nothing is easier than to make him a canting hypocrite —nothing more difficult than to make him a sincere Christian. Indeed, the very first and the most prominent effect of missionary teaching upon him is to raise his self-conceit, of which he naturally has a fair allowance, to a height at which it is almost unendurable. How far removed from the humility and diffidence which should attend the faintest dawn of Divine truth upon the soul!

I shall never forget my disgust when, having off-saddled one broiling day, after a ride of about twenty or thirty miles, at a large missionary establishment, and having grievously committed myself by requesting a draught of *utshuala*, I was incontinently set upon by one of these hopeful converts, who was determined not to lose the opportunity of displaying his superior attainments. There was no Apollo to preserve me, and the fellow earned his right of boring by a pot of *amaas*, which, he informed me, was much better than *utshuala*, and would not make my head go so (suiting the action to the word). Everything, according to his creed, was "*ai muschla*," or not good. It was "*ai muschla*" to drink beer, to smoke, to sing about cows, to go naked, to have more than one wife;—but it was good to sing psalms; and, bringing a hymn-book out of his pocket, for he wore shirt and trowsers, he forthwith gave me an opportunity of judging of his proficiency in sacred music. I must candidly confess that I have heard quite as bad singing in an English parish church. He showed me his wife's Testament, too, in which her name was written, as he affirmed, by herself; if so, she might give a lesson to many a young lady of my acquaintance in penmanship. But what displeased me was the fellow's manner, which said, as clearly as words could have done, that as far as religion went, he was perfectly indifferent; but, on the one hand, he had the sense to see that, by falling in with the missionary's notions, he got better treatment, and was altogether the gainer in worldly wealth; and on the other, his vanity was tickled with the idea of being raised to a superiority over his fellows, and placed on an equality with the white man, an idea which he had imbibed to some purpose; for when I asked him whether he would accompany me to England, he hesitated a minute or two, and then made me the following modest proposal:—That if I would take him, and his wife, feed and clothe them, and give them £4 a month, he would consent!

The Church, indeed, possesses, in the authority with which she is invested, in her immediate connection with the secular power, and more than all, in her excellent doctrine of silent obedience and submission, a powerful antidote against the evils to which I have alluded: and far be it from me to deny that her efforts may be attended with a blessing which can scarcely be expected to follow those of unauthorized and unordained preachers; but I much fear that even her teaching would be thrown away upon the full-grown savage, whether male or female. It is upon a new generation that her hopes must be built, and upon which all her exertions should be concentrated. With the children, if completely isolated from the rest of their kind, and brought up from their tenderest years under sound religious training, strict discipline, and carefully regulated instruction, something may be done; at all events, the experiment is well worth the trial, and in such hands, cannot lead to harm. A habit of docile humble submission once established in their minds, the way would be laid open for the inculcation of the doctrines with which such a disposition can alone accord.

In all this, I would not be understood to imply a single word which might be construed into an attack upon the dissenting missionaries now settled in Natal. I have every reason to believe them earnest, indefatigable, self-denying labourers. If they have failed in accomplishing much actual good, it has been the fault of the system which, as members of different societies, they are compelled to adopt—not of any want of zeal in themselves. With the system alone, therefore, is my quarrel. To teach the Kafirs to read and write, to distribute thousands of Bibles amongst them—this is a mere secondary point; indeed, it may be questioned whether the Bible itself, without the authority of the Church to guide and direct the reader, would not be the means of confusing rather than enlightening the minds of these benighted people.

Because a Kafir wears trousers, drinks no *utshuala*, has but one wife, reads his Bible, and argues plausibly and cleverly on religious topics—because he subscribes for the erection of chapels and schools—nay, because he is invested with the office of deacon or elder, it does not necessarily follow that he is a Christian. He may be, and has been all this, and yet remains, to all intents and purposes, an unconverted heathen. Sound discipline must be the basis of conversion, and that cannot be attained under the present system.

If the Government will work cordially with the Church, great results may follow, otherwise we shall find that "the dog will return to his vomit," and the apostate disciple prove worse than the natural uncultivated savage.

Horace tells us something about driving out nature with a pitchfork; and the warning of an earlier poet against pet menageries is so remarkably appropriate, that I cannot better conclude this chapter than by transcribing it. For the sake of my fair readers I have clothed it in an English garb; the scholar will excuse the paltry attempt,—it is not intended for him:—

Thus hath a man
Reared for his house's bane
A lion cub, new weaned;—
In the first jousts of life
Gentle, and mild, and tame:
The children's playfellow—the old man's joy;—
Oft would they in their arms,
Like to a nursling babe,
Dandle their savage guest;
And he, when hunger pressed,
With look benign, would greet the extended hand;—
But in due time he told
The nature which of old,
Even from his birth, had slumbered in his breast.

For on the slaughtered flock
Making forbidden feast,
He with its bloody fragments strewed the floor,
And stained the house with gore,—
An ill requital for their fostering care;—
Too late the inmates found
A mighty pest revealed,
A grief they could not shun,
A many-killing curse;
As if with foul intent,
By evil spirit sent,
Destruction's minister had come,
And they been doomed to nurse
The destined spoiler of their peaceful home.[*]

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[*] Æschylus Agamemnon: *ἔθρεψεν δε λέοντα· κ.τ.λ.*

CHAPTER XV.

A SICK-NURSE—RECOVERY—HOMEWARD BOUND—RIDE TO D'URBAN—EMBARKATION—DELAYS—A FORTNIGHT IN HARBOUR—A WET WALK—A GALE IN THE PORT—THE BAR—GOING OUT OF HARBOUR—AT ANCHOR—THE HANNAH SETS SAIL — DEATH AT SEA — A FALSE MOVE—A STORM—ALGOA BAY—THE SURF—WASLEY'S—THE TOWN—MISSIONARY BURNT IN EFFIGY—HOTTENTOTS — "ONE FOR SORROW" — MORE STORMS—LADY PASSENGERS—HEAD WINDS—SHORT ALLOWANCE—GALLANT EXPLOIT—A NARROW ESCAPE—MORE GOOD THAN EVIL—TOM SAVED.

DURING the illness which I incidentally mentioned in the last chapter, Bitje was not my only nurse. A week or two previously I had been agreeably surprised by the sudden appearance of Barkley, who came in, true "Smous" fashion, with a string of young horses and cattle,—the former from the renowned Hantam district, in the old colony; the latter from the Sovereignty, where he had disposed of the wagon, and much of its now useless contents. He had slipped across the frontier just before it became impassable, and had had a tedious and solitary, but not disastrous journey.

His companion had changed his ploughshare into a sword, and had already figured in more than one despatch; but the two friends had agreed to meet at Algoa Bay, and proceed home together. I was homeward-bound myself, and though I had not contemplated an immediate departure, was easily persuaded to hurry my preparations, and secure that best antidote to the tedium of a voyage, the companionship of kind and pleasant friends.

I was yet confined to my room when this resolution was taken; and so reduced by illness, that on the removal of our host, E——, with all his establishment from Balcony House to Verandah Lodge, a large and handsome building, which the increase of his business had enabled him to venture upon, I was carried, helpless as a child, upon Barkley's shoulders, and deposited in the pretty little chamber allotted to me in our new abode, which, but for his stout arm and kind heart, I scarcely know how I should have reached.

Recovery, however, when once begun, is astonishingly rapid in this delightful climate, and within a week after my removal, I was galloping over the *vlei* on one of the newly-imported steeds, and longing for a stiff fence to try his mettle and my own. A few days more, and all was ready for a start. Natal horses, saddles, and all kinds of movables and immovables—strictly colonial—were sold and, notwithstanding the press of time, without loss; parting visits were paid; letters, and parcels, and messages entrusted to our care; horns, skins, and Kafir ornaments were collected for our curiosity-loving friends at home; and, best thing of all, the painful process of packing was completed.

It was on the first of April,—a year ago this very day that I am writing it,—somewhere about seven in the morning, that I turned round in the saddle to wave a last (?) adieu to the familiar forms upon the *stoep* of Verandah Lodge, whence many an expression of good will and kind regard followed me on my way. "Come back again," cried one, "with a wife and a fortune!" "Stay at home, if you are wise," cried a second. "Don't forget to write," said several voices at once; and their echo was in my ear long after I had cleared the town, and was fairly out on the open country.

People may rail at the world, and talk of its coldness, and the want of kindred spirits and true sympathy. I believe the deficiency to be in themselves; and that if they could shake off their own icy wrappers, and meet their fellows with a warm and natural grasp, they would find few hearts or hands that would not thaw to the touch—few natures that would not respond to the invitation—very few that would not repay the effort. For my own part, I have seldom made a sojourn in any place (and my experience has been pretty extensive) where I have not left at parting quite enough of kindly feeling—call it regard or affection, or the mere result of familiar intercourse—to cause a vacuum in some corner of the heart, which has been none the lighter for the loss. Indeed, as on this morning the empty corner has been filled up with regrets and recollections, and distrustful anticipations, which weigh much heavier, and do not sit so easy.

Natal, too, as if in sympathy, was putting on her autumn dress again; and she looks neither cheerful nor pretty in it. Hers is not the gorgeous livery of the October forest:—

> The "bright leaves reddening ere they fall,"

or that of the yellow hedge-rows stripping off their faded apparel, and hanging the ruby berries on their bare but graceful branchlets. The rank grass, bent with the weight of its own ripe seeds, its verdure and freshness gone as though pestilence-stricken in the height of its luxuriance; or the black ashes, that showed where earthly fires have been doing the sun's work more completely and expeditiously,—these do not combine to form an exhilarating picture; and had I been alone, I should probably have had to recall this—my last ride—with much less pleasure than any I had taken in the colony. A lively comrade, however, is a sure remedy against blue devils, from whatever cause they may arise; and the young emigrant who rode by my side was too full of cheerfulness and animation for dullness to exist long in his company. We slept that night at Klip Spruit, where the kind host insisted on giving up his bed for my accommodation, and the next evening, after a long but not tedious ride through the most beautiful forest scenery I had yet met with in Africa, found ourselves in the broad *vlei* that stretches up from the sea between the Berea and the wooded high land terminating in the Bluff, whose bold outline stood out right before us, keeping quiet watch over the narrow entrance-gate of the colony.

I had never been in D'Urban since my first arrival, and was able to appreciate the rapid strides it had made in a period of scarcely seven months. Houses had sprung up in all directions. Brick and mortar was in many instances superseding wattle-and-dab; and large warehouses and stores were beginning to give a more substantial and business-like appearance to this quaintest of cities. I could not help suspecting that the credit of some of the proprietors rested on a foundation little more secure than the sand on which their ambitious structures were raised, and into which, or into a gulf equally profound, their over-bold speculations were but too likely to plunge them.

There was quite a show of shipping in the bay, but we had no eyes for any but the brigantine Hannah, which lay nearest the outlet of the harbour, ready to slip away with the first breath of westerly wind; for it was in her that we had taken our passage to Cape Town. She was to call at Algoa Bay *en route*, and expected to make the voyage in eight or ten days. Her captain was well known to us personally as well as by reputation, both for good seamanship, and other agreeable qualities, and our disappointment was very great on finding that he had for this trip entrusted the command to his first mate, and that we should lose alike the pleasure of his company and the certainty of good management in every particular which his presence on board would have ensured us. This was but the beginning of our misfortunes. As I have already hinted—to take a ship out of the harbour, a westerly wind is absolutely necessary; while from the moment that she is in open sea, the fair wind for Cape Town must come from an exactly opposite quarter. Owing to this circumstance, and the want of a steam-tug, which would at once remedy the evil, ships are often detained for days, and even weeks, in the harbour; and when at length they have crossed the bar, they have to contend for many days against a head wind, and one, too, which in the winter season, is almost always a gale. It was on the 4th of April, that a strong westerly breeze having suddenly sprung up, the passengers for the Hannah were hurried frantically on board, urged by the repeated maxim, that "time and tide wait for no man," and the warning that there would be another shift of wind within twenty-four hours.

The shore-going friends have taken a parting glass in the cabin, and dropped one by one over the side; the sea-going have gazed on one another as if calculating the chances of pleasure or the reverse to be derived from each other's society; berths have been inspected and arranged, and all are eager for a start. The pilot boat has gone forward to examine the bar, and we only wait its return. Alas!

after an hour's anxious expectation, the report reaches us that the surf is too heavy to make the attempt to-night, and that we must wait the next tide. The following morning we are rocking lazily at anchor, while a steady easterly breeze, to which, if outside, we might spread every rag of canvas, played away over our loose masts and useless rigging.

A fair scene is the harbour of Natal: but lovelier prospects might well become distasteful to the most devoted admirer of Nature's beauties, under circumstances of such tantalizing delay. Nor was our temper improved by the constant arrival, during this and the following day, of successive boat-loads of sugar, which we shrewdly suspected had more to do with our disappointment of the previous night than the violence of the surf or any other alleged cause of detention. Those of the passengers who had homes or friends at D'Urban left the ship at once, determined not to be lured back by any false alarm, while the rest of us passed an amphibious kind of existence, half on shore and half on board, and endured it with what patience we could muster.

Some tedious hours we whiled away with rod and line at the foot of the bluff, where the breakers dash among the jagged rocks and the fragments of the Minerva lie scattered along the beach. The fish were of indescribable shapes and of all the colours of the rainbow; and we rarely caught two of the same species. Those of the perch kind were especially beautiful and delicious eating. Sometimes we would row up the bay, and, landing on one of the islands, feast on the wild plum or *umtumgula*, a choice and delicate fruit, particularly excellent as a preserve, which grows luxuriantly there.

But if the delay was sufficiently irksome to us men, to the ladies it was perfect misery. To one of them, indeed, a poor girl in the last stage of consumption, it was something far more serious. She had been brought to Natal in the vain hope of benefit to be derived from change of air, and she now only longed to return home to die. Bitter indeed to her was the sickness of "hope deferred," as she felt the days of her life drawing rapidly to a close, and the chance of her ever seeing the beloved Cape growing hourly less and less! She never did see it!

The 15th of April, and still the Hannah lies motionless in the harbour; and not she alone, but four other vessels are loaded and ready for departure. On the afternoon of that day, tokens of change once more appeared; and Barkley and I, who had been up at the village, were advised to lose no time in returning to the ship. As the tide was making out, we took off our shoes and stockings and started off by the short cut across the angle of the Bay which, at the ebb, is perfectly dry, and on which we did not expect more than a few inches of water in the present state of the tide. Wet feet are a luxury in Natal; and we did not count upon more, but whether that in the dusk of the evening we mistook our point, or whether we had not allowed sufficient time for the water to retreat, we had not gone far before it flowed first above our knees, and then up to our waists, and we expected it at every step "to win our hats abune." Some fairy influence seemed to be at work in the matter; for at one moment the trees of the opposite shore would seem close at hand, and the next there was nothing but "water, water, everywhere." We began to feel rather uncomfortable, and really it was more by good luck than cunning that we at length found ourselves under the Custom-house bank, none the worse except that we were nearly parboiled with our exertions in the tepid element.

The kind of mirage by which we had been deceived is no uncommon thing in the Bay and its "Will-o'-the-wisp" tricks are sometimes ludicrous enough; but had we by chance turned our heads a trifle more to the right, we should soon have found it no laughing matter. As it was, we plodded on along the sand till we came abreast of our ship, when our hail was answered by the unwelcome intelligence that the boat was gone up the Bay to the town.

Constrained to wait on this inhospitable spit of sand, I turned the opportunity to account by examining the works constructed by Mr. Milne, the engineer employed for the deepening, and, if possible, the entire removal of the the bar. This being the shallowest side, he has thrown out a number of small piers, consisting simply of two rows of stakes driven deep into the sand, the space between them filled with large stones. By this means the channel is narrowed and the whole force of the stream thrown on the other side under the bluff, where the water is deepest. There is already a decided improvement, but to what extent it can be carried is yet doubtful. I believe that from fifteen to sixteen feet can now be got on the bar in spring tides. Intent on these observations, I had forgotten all about the promised change of weather, when I was startled by Barkley's exclamation: "Here comes the wind." I looked up; a black cloud had suddenly made its appearance on the western horizon; the sea breeze had suddenly dropped; there was a sense of struggle among the elements, a whirling movement in the air; and then the squall burst out of the west, driving before it a cold piercing rain that did not materially add to the comfort of our position. In three minutes the Bay, which had been calm as a pool, was lashed into a sheet of foam, the waves breaking round the little piers, and sucking in the sand at our feet in perfect whirlpools. We were now doubly anxious to get on board, and, returning to the Custom-house, made earnest application for a boat, but were informed that the attempt to board the ship would be hazardous in the extreme. Just then we heard a rushing sound upon the water, and, looking out to sea, saw what might be a winged creature dart like a meteor down the bay, casting a white cloud of spray around its glancing course. We shouted; but we might as well have hailed a hurricane. Back we ran at the top of our speed to the spit opposite the Hannah; but the boat, if boat it were, had disappeared. We afterwards found that she had been driven round the point, and upset; and that the men who, like all sailors when left to themselves, had been "carrying on" in spite of the squall, had narrowly escaped drowning. For ourselves we had now no alternative left but to trudge back to D'Urban; and, after a heavy walk over the sands, we reached Mrs. Russell's in time for a very acceptable cup of tea, and a glass of *pontac*, which was scarcely less so.

This time the wind did not fail us as before, but, when the gale ceased, which it did with day-break, continued to hang, though but lightly, in the same quarter. All were once more on board; the owner himself, with a large party of friends, had come to see his ship safe over the barrier, and as we got under weigh rather more expeditiously, and with less bustle, than we expected, our visitors, somewhat against their will, were obliged to bear us company through the most delicate and dangerous bit of navigation which the voyage was likely to present. The wind, as I have already observed, was very light, and we were more than once so near to the shore that an active man might have leaped from the bulwarks on dry land, and we were only saved from being stranded by a prompt dropping of the anchor; but by dint of very careful handling we at length passed the bar without a touch, and, as the wind then became foul, anchored outside, to await a change. The Dreadnought and Mountain Maid followed safely in our wake, but the Vixen was not so fortunate, turning broadside on the bar, and coming off with the loss of both her anchors. Our friends meanwhile had returned in the pilot-boat, giving us a lusty round of cheers as they shoved off, which we as lustily returned. That day and the next we rocked heavily at anchor, than which no motion can be conceived more calculated to clear the after-deck, and to reduce would-be nautical gentlemen to their proper terrestrial level.

Of all days in the year it was Good Friday that our voyage actually commenced; and never did voyage more fully confirm the idea of ill-luck which sailors attach to any enterprise begun on this day. On Easter-Eve the poor girl breathed her last so quietly that we could hardly tell the moment of her departure. On Easter-Day we committed her body to the deep, with less of ceremony, perhaps, but I trust with not less decorum, or true feeling, than attends such an office on shore. The late captain of the Minerva, Mr. Moir, read the funeral service, and as the corpse, in its simple canvas wrapper, sunk beneath the clear, calm, green sea, I could not help contrasting the present scene with some sights I had witnessed in our city churchyards, and feeling that as far as it was allowable to have a choice in such matters, this was the resting-place I should select for my mortal part to remain in till the time when earth and sea shall alike give up their dead, and the body shall rise again to new life, cleansed from the dishonours of the grave.

On the morning of the 23rd we were, by reckoning, abreast of Algoa Bay, but seeing our consort, the Mountain Maid, tack to eastward, our captain concluded that we had overrun our point, and put the ship about. We did not find out our mistake till we had lost precious time, and a breeze that would have taken us right into port. An opportunity missed is not easily recovered, as we experienced to our cost, for just as we had entered the bay, and had caught a glimpse of the lights in Port Elizabeth, and were congratulating each other on the prospect of a supper on shore, a black arch suddenly spanned the landward horizon, and, darting from its centre with a roar like thunder, the north-west hurricane burst upon us. "Down with the helm! hard up." "Hard up, it is sir," shouted the captain. Heavily the schooner swayed round, her masts creaking and groaning with the strain, and her whole frame trembling, as if with instinctive fear; another minute and she was dashing madly forward, while the demon of the storm shrieked and howled above, beneath, and around her, as if in furious pursuit. As one by one, with that energy which sailors in the moment of danger so prominently display, gib, mainsail, and foretop-sail were staved, hauled down, and clewed up, her head rose more buoyantly above the threatening surge, her motion became lighter and more controlled, and in half an hour's time she had got well clear of the land, and lying-to with nothing but her mainstay-sails set, was as snug and secure as any floating creature could be that was exposed to that awful tempest. A gale on the south coast of Africa is no very rare occurrence, nor'-westers and sou'-easters dividing the year pretty equally between them; and I can speak of this one with the less fear of falling into the suspicion of dealing in landsman's exaggeration, since I have the authority of a captain of twenty year's experience in the coasting trade between Algoa Bay and the Cape, who assured me that he had never known it to blow harder. The next morning we were fifty miles from land, and my sea-log, which lies open before me, adds, "gale moderating," "sea mountains high." It was not till the evening of the 25th that, under happier auspices, we again entered the bay, and stood in for the anchorage.

Algoa Bay, in common with most African ports, is little better than an open roadstead, exposed to the full sweep of the south-easterly gales; and when these prevail, as they do pretty generally throughout the summer months, it is by no means a pleasant place to cast anchor in. So well is this known to the commercial world, that the rate of insurance to this port is, with one exception, higher than to any other frequented by English vessels. The wrecks which may be always seen along its surf-girt shore, bear fearful testimony to the number of casualties, which, however, have been somewhat diminished by the erection of a splendid lighthouse, with what is termed a flashing light, on Cape Recife, the low point at its western extremity, on which many a gallant ship has been lost. Another great drawback to the Bay is the surf, which makes landing at all times troublesome, and in rough weather, to inexperienced hands, extremely dangerous. To obviate this difficulty a pier was carried out into the smooth water beyond; but it was of wood, and an unfortunate ship driving straight upon it, it was shattered to pieces. But courage and skill are generally at command where an obstacle of this kind exists, and the harbour boats in Algoa Bay are perhaps the finest in the world; certainly a finer crew could not be found. Under their guidance the feat is no more than shooting a St. Lawrence rapid in one of the regular steamers, The passenger can enjoy the excitement, with little risk and no responsibility. As we approached the frothy border, the head of the boat was square on to the beach; the stroke, always regular and even, was increased in power and velocity; a bound like the shy of a well-bred courser, and we appeared to fly into the air, whence, pausing the hundredth part of a second, we descended an abyss so steep, that as I sat in the stern sheets, holding on for the bare life, the bow oar appeared at the bottom of a precipice beneath my feet. Another bound; and, as the keel touches the sand, out spring the hardy crew on either side, and, while some hold fast the boat against the resorbent influence of the tide, others seize each a passenger in their brawny arms, or receive him upon their steady shoulders, and bearing him through the creamy foam, deposit him safe on dry ground. There is but one thing to complain of in all this, and that is the extravagance of the charge. There were five of us, and we paid seven shillings and six-pence a-piece; which, considering that the crew might easily make half-a-dozen trips in the forenoon, may be reckoned pretty considerable pay. But we were in no mood to grumble, though quite ready to do justice to an excellent breakfast of boiled fish and penguin's eggs, among other luxuries, at Wasley's, a very pattern of an hotel, with the additional recommendation of a capital billiard-table, and a most obliging and companionable host. The eggs are procured from an island in the Bay, where these remarkable birds have a perfect colony, and where, on the night of the storm, the Mountain Maid had a narrow escape from being wrecked. So imminent was the danger, that the captain had actually secured his papers and other valuables about his person, in momentary expectation of her striking, thinking it impossible that she could pass in safety the narrow channel through which he was compelled to steer.

Port Elizabeth is a bustling, thriving place, with no beauty to recommend it; but their is an animation and progressive spirit about its inhabitants that must always ensure its prosperity; and should the seat of government be removed to Graham's Town, as sooner or later it must be, will make it the most important of South African cities. I am told that there is a homely, hearty tone in the society here, which may be sought for in vain either amongst the gay and fashionable circles at the Cape, or the less refined settlers at Natal; and from what I saw during my short stay, I should be disposed to put the fullest faith in the assertion.

The town itself is built on the side of a hill, whose summit is clothed with short grass, like the Brighton downs, and quite as windy,—a nice place for a gallop after a day's work in the dust and sand below. The aspect of the country is very unpromising, either to the agriculturist or the seeker of the picturesque; nor is there any great improvement till you reach Uitenhage, at twenty miles distance, well known as a perfect paradise of luxuriant vegetation. The streets are regular and well stoned, and the houses substantial, and sometimes even handsome. I remember being particularly disappointed on being told that a fine building, of chaste and true ecclesiastical style, which ought to have been the church, belonged to a dissenting congregation. The church, otherwise a respectable edifice, was quite thrown in the shade,—emblem of the subordinate part which the body it represents has hitherto played in the religious affairs of the colony; a reproach which the indefatigable Bishop is now straining every nerve to remove. May he meet with the success his zeal and singleness of purpose merit! There is more, even in a political sense, involved in the issue of his labours,—more that is fraught with results which must affect governors as well as governed, than statesmen of the nineteenth century have either eyes to perceive or courage to confess: so nearly allied are loyalty and churchmanship, and so identical the causes which lead to contempt of temporal and of spiritual authorities.

A remarkable exemplification of this occurred during our short stay. A *soi-disant* reverend happened to arrive from Graham's Town, whence he had been obliged to fly the fury of the populace, being shrewdly suspected of having had a finger in that most villainously concocted pie—the Hottentot rebellion. It is not necessary for me to enter upon the question of the justice of these suspicions; the Bay people evidently thought them worthy of belief, since he was not only burnt in effigy in the streets, and treated to all the honours that are usually paid to "Guy Fawkes, the prince of sinisters," but so completely was he tabooed, that the very boatmen refused to carry him through the surf, and captains preferred empty berths to so ill-omened a passenger. He has since come to England, and has, I doubt not, given his own version of the story; but as in these matters belief is entirely subservient to inclination, and judgment always precedes the hearing of evidence, the less said on the subject the better.

Apart from the macadamized streets, stone houses, and other marks of long-established prosperity which make the contrast between D'Urban and Port Elizabeth sufficiently striking, there is one remarkable point of distinction which more than streets or buildings attracts the traveller's attention, stamping a peculiar character on either town. I allude to the complete change which here takes place in the coloured population; the tall and lathy Kafir, with his belt and apron of cats' tails, being replaced by the squat Hottentot, in European costume, with his broad-brimmed hat, and crown of ostrich feathers. The women too, who, in D'Urban and Maritzburg, rarely make their appearance, except to bring in country produce, fruits, reeds, or wood to market, here swarm like monkeys in a kloof, and keep up a clamour as incessant and unintelligible. Their graceful forms clad in bright cotton petticoats, with gaudy 'kerchiefs about their heads, add much to the liveliness and animation of the scene. Their faces apart, many of them might be called beautiful; and some half-castes of taller stature, with the negro features softened down, and the colour very little darker, than to be just sure proof, might contest the apple with many a fair Helen of the north on terms of equal rivalry. They remind one of the quadroons of the southern states, whom, unfortunately, they resemble but too closely, in other points besides personal appearance.

We spent four very pleasant days at Wasley's, and it was with regret that I found myself unable to make a longer stay; the more so, as our party on board was diminished by the loss of its most agreeable members,—an officer in the commissariat who had come round to join the forces on the frontier, and Barkley, who, under pretext of awaiting tidings of our mutual friend, exchanged his narrow berth in the little schooner, for the chance of better quarters, and a shorter sea voyage.

As we glided out of the Bay on the evening of the 29th, our sails just filling to a light but a fair breeze, a single porpoise darted across our bows, and for some time continued to play round us, drawing bright streaks of light on the calm surface, that flashed, and vanished, and then appeared instantaneously on the other side of the ship, as if coming from a different quarter. I am not superstitious; but these creatures are seldom seen except in shoals; and though there is nothing in common, that I know of, between a porpoise and a magpie, yet I could not help fancying that the "one for sorrow," might prove as applicable to the fish, if fish it can be called, as to the bird. "Quite as applicable," says the strong-minded man with a sneer; and he is probably right; and yet, within twelve hours, it blew a hurricane. Four days after we were still abreast of Cape Recife, having been unable, even with the Mozambique current in our favour, to make the slightest progress to westward. I can convey no idea to a landsman of the fury of a nor'-wester in these latitudes; the sailor needs no description of mine. The schooner was in light ballast trim, tight as a drum, buoyant, and in every respect as good a sea boat as ever floated; but, on the other hand, she was never what is commonly termed a clipper, and on the present occasion was so high out of the water that, when sailing "by the wind" she made more lea than headway, and when hove-to, as she was sometimes for days together, she drifted broadside-on, like a feather, before the blast. From the same cause, when under snug canvas, she rolled so fearfully that we were in momentary expectation of seeing her masts go over the side —an apprehension which rose into real alarm, when in the height of the storm, mainstay and backstay successively parted, the latter with a report loud as that of a musket. Happily this occurred in the day time, when it was comparatively easy to secure the flapping tackle, and make all fast again with a new splice: had it happened in the night, it would have been a much more serious affair. It is a common saying among sailors that, unless you have rounded the Cape, you do not know what is meant by a sea; and certainly neither the heavy swell of the Bay of Biscay, nor the long roll of the Atlantic, nor the short chop, less appalling but more dangerous, of our own channel, gives more than a faint idea of the tumultuous strife of waters that accompanies a gale of wind on Agullas Bank. Lashed into ungovernable fury, the waves appear no longer to succeed one another at regular intervals, but to be tossed into a confused and struggling heap, whose contending parts only unite to pour their avalanche upon the vexed barque that labours and strains and plunges among them.

It is true, that in all this, there was more of the appearance than the reality of danger; and that the critical moments when danger did occur, passed generally unnoticed by the trembling passengers, whose faces rose and fell with the roar of the wind in the cordage, or the hollow sound of the rollers, as they broke against the firm knit timbers of the old ship: but still there was enough to account for a blanched cheek, even among the men; and as for the poor women, the horrors of actual shipwreck could have added little to their distress. Pent in a close stifling cabin, which hardly allowed them standing room; their berths only separated by a curtain from our common dinner table, with no one to wait upon them but a miserable little scarecrow urchin, on whom, in the illness of the steward, all his multifarious duties had devolved; exposed to the society of a captain, whose obtrusive familiarity was only equalled by his coarseness, whose every word was an execration, and who inspired as little confidence in his skill as respect for his authority; with a discontented and all but mutinous crew; and with the hope of speedy release becoming daily more and more distant and uncertain, it was no marvel if even the patient endurance for which their sex has been renowned, gave way before so severe a trial. On the whole, they behaved nobly; and when a worse evil appeared to threaten us, and our provisions, which had been amply, nay sumptuously, calculated for a voyage of eight or ten days, began, after the third week, to run short, they not only put us to shame by their quiet and cheerful submission to privations which must have come with tenfold hardship upon them; but, like true useful Englishwomen, turned their house-keeping talents to account, and were of the greatest assistance to us, in eking out what remained of our stores, and concocting palatable messes, with the smallest quantity, and most unpromising kind of material.

The storms generally lasted from four to five days, and were divided by intervals of dead calm of from twenty-four to forty-eight hours' duration. Their approach was always intimated by a sudden fall in the barometer, which, a sure monitor in every sea, is in these latitudes an unerring and invariable one; nor can its warnings be neglected with impunity.

I will not detain the reader with the contents of our sea-log, which is full of tackings and reefings, of setting and taking in of sails, and many other manœuvres which, though painfully interesting at the time, require the pen of a Marryat or a Chamier to make them otherwise than tedious and unintelligible on paper: nor will I attempt to describe our course, which crossing and recrossing itself in all possible directions, resembled, when drawn upon the chart, with its multiplicity of angles, some intricate problem of Euclid, over which the arithemetic mathematician might pore with delighted perplexity—it was a veritable *pons asinorum* to us. I would rather, before bidding a final adieu to the Hannah, chronicle an instance of daring gallantry which occurred on her last voyage from the Cape to Natal, and which from the modesty of the chief actors in the scene, and the remoteness of the theatre on which it was performed, is scarcely likely to reach the public ear through any other channel.

There were on board three officers, whom the exploits of Gordon Cumming, and the sight of his gorgeous heap of trophies, had fired with an ardour for wild sports, which nothing short of an expedition to South Africa could quench; and they were now on the very road to Natal whence their start was to be made for the far interior. I do not know that I should he pardoned for mentioning their names, but I shall ever count the few days which I spent in their company, before leaving Maritzburg, among the pleasantest of my sojourn in the colony. The incident which I am about to narrate was told me by our captain, who, in his more suitable capacity of mate, was present on the occasion, and who, to do him justice, showed more feeling in his manner of relating it, than I should have been disposed to credit him for.

A heedless little headstrong lad, the steward's drudge and general fag of the ship, stepping thoughtlessly out on the bowsprit, and gossiping with the men, or doing anything rather than looking carefully to his steps, missed his footing and dropped into the sea. At the cry of "boy overboard," C—— and W——, two of the officers I have mentioned, who chanced to be standing on the deck, plunged without a moment's hesitation over the side, and struck out boldly to the rescue. The water was smooth and calm, and the ship was gliding quietly along, under royals and studding sails. The poor boy had been carried right under the keel, and coming up astern, had seized a fishing-line that was hanging from the taffrail, and might be seen clinging to it with desperate tenacity.

"Will he hold on till help reaches him?" Alas! that grasp will never be loosened while flesh and bone cling together on the lifeless corpse! For the frail line has broken, and his last cry had been drowned beneath the curling eddy in the ship's wake. And well was it for the gallant fellows who sprang in to save him, that it was so; encumbered by their clothes, their most strenuous exertions scarcely served to support themselves on the water, and the clutch of the drowning lad must have been fatal to them. As it was, one, a very powerful and athletic man, managed to catch a rope that was thrown out to him, and so to climb up the side; but when the boat was lowered, which it was with a promptitude and energy which showed how high the two adventurers stood in the good graces of the crew, so completely exhausted was W——, that it was with the greatest difficulty, the united strength of the mate and sailors succeeded in dragging him on board.

Thanks to true English hearts, there are seldom wanting out of the smallest company men who will risk their lives for that of a fellow creature; but in these days, when evil-disposed people set the poor against the rich, and excite the jealousy of the lower classes against all who are favoured by birth, station or fortune, it may not be amiss to record how two young pleasure-seeking officers sprang into an ocean abounding with sharks, and narrowly escaped death to save the life of a poor cabin boy.

It is a bad thing to have a foul wind; but on board the Hannah we had the peculiar art of making a fair breeze a foul one; and twice we had the mortification of seeing an opportunity of making our desired point thrown away,—once through an error in the chronometer, which put us on the wrong side of the Cape of Good Hope, not many miles from the scene of the disastrous wreck of the Birkenhead; and again, when our captain, thinking we were a-head of Table Bay, stood straight in for shore, in a thick fog, and in less than a quarter of an hour would have run us on the breakers, had not a schooner, shooting out of the mist right under our bows, providentially warned us of our dangerous vicinity.

If there be a weak point in a man's character, such a voyage as this must bring it to light, and he may well be called *totus teres atque rotundus* who stands the test. I need scarcely say that we were beginning to get weary of each other's society, that some lost their spirits, and others their temper; and yet, on the whole, I look back with pleasure upon that little cabin. To be sure there were two old Dutch ladies (maiden ladies of course) who were sea-sick all the time, only somehow it never interfered with their appetites; and I have a grudge against them, because, when we were reduced to famine rations, and living on rice and gruel, they said nothing of two large Natal hams, which were lying in the hold, and which they had not the generosity to sacrifice for the public good. But then there was dear good Mrs. S——, with her lively amusing little girl, the pattern of cheerful patience and good humour; and there was the Irish widow, with whom we used to play at cribbage, and laugh till the old timbers rung again, and with whom *somebody* was very much smitten; and there was Mr. C——, who tried to keep us all in order; and last of all there was the old tom cat, the genius of the ship, who would sit so gravely, rocking to and fro, and steadying himself against the uneasy motion like an old tar, and who got so spitefully fat upon nothing that we could not have abstained much longer from putting our reiterated threats into execution, of turning him into soup.

But everything has an end, and just as poor pussy's life was trembling in the balance, the long-delayed breeze filled our sails, and sweeping gently up the coast, in the shadow of the Lion's Rump we rounded the low promontory of Green Point, and on the evening of the 22nd anchored our storm-tossed barque in Table Bay, after a passage of thirty days of actual sailing, and just forty-eight days from that on which we had first embarked.

Of all the ships that sailed with us, either from Natal or Algoa Bay, but one had arrived; and, as we afterwards learned, none had escaped loss of spars, or injury or accident of some kind; so that we had every reason to be most thankful.

CHAPTER XVI.

PLEASANT CONTRAST—MRS. PARKER'S—AGREEABLE SOCIETY—CAPE TOWN—THE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY—RACES—SEIZURE OF A SLAVER—THE DON—AWKWARD RENCONTRE — HOMEWARD BOUND — ST. HELENA — SIERRA LEONE—ST. VINCENT—HOME—L'ENVOI.

FROM the deck of the Hannah to a snug room at Mrs. Parker's—a well-dressed dinner, and a bottle of very tolerable Madeira—could any contrast be more complete? We have been but a couple of hours on shore, and yet the last month's privations and dangers, and the wearisome length of the voyage, appear to us like an unsubstantial dream, which we recall with difficulty to our bewildered imagination. All we feel is, that we enjoy the comforts that surround us with unusual zest, and that we need have no scruples in doing so. And right well does Mrs. Parker provide for the comfort of the weary voyager, who frequently prolongs his stay from weeks to months, unwilling to exchange such luxuries for the precarious accommodation of ship or country quarters. Her *table d'hôte*, where continental freedom is blended with just enough of English reserve to keep off vulgarity, and enough English heartiness to banish formal restrictions, is, in my opinion, one of the pleasantest in the world. Working soldiers from Indian or African campaigns; young cadets fresh from the great nursery, and eager to prove their mettle; weather-beaten captains, and raw middies; servants of the company with long purses and sallow faces; sportsmen tried and untried, from the true Gordon Cumming breed to the fashionable *ennuyé*, who expects to bag lions like Norfolk partridges; ladies *en route* to India for husbands, or homeward for health; engineers, emigrants, Government officers;—these, and many other varieties of the genus "Traveller," contribute to form a society ever changing, ever original, from which it is a man's own fault, if he do not extract both agreeable excitement and sound profit.

I shall not attempt to describe Cape Town. Who is not familiar with its peculiar, its indescribable scenery? Shut out, as it appears to be, from the rest of the world, with the rude waves dashing in front, and the mighty Table mountain rising immediately behind, it is at once a picture of man's enterprise, and of his insignificance! Taken by itself, it is simply a clean, neat, regularly-built town, with a general air of comfort, and even luxury about it, and with three or four tolerable attempts at more ornamental structure. The Bay will challenge comparison with Algoa as a dangerous roadstead; the only difference being, that here the north-west wind is the dreaded enemy instead of the south-east; the latter, however, though generally harmless at sea, is by no means so on land, as it whirls aloft, not only the red soil, but the very pebbles, which descend occasionally like a storm of hail, to the great annoyance of all who venture abroad. It is this wind, too, which spreads the remarkable covering of cloud upon the mountain, known as the "table-cloth"—a phenomenon I had not the luck to witness during my short stay.

A right loyal people are the inhabitants of Cape Town, and nowhere have I seen her Majesty's birthday kept with more holiday observance. The festivities had been for some time previously announced to take place at the village of Wynberg, about nine miles from the town; and every four-legged creature in the neighbourhood was engaged three deep; so C—— and I, having resolved to be present at the fun, were content, not without sundry misgivings, to commit ourselves, with thirty-six equally reckless companions, to a kind of van or omnibus, drawn by four horses, and very much resembling those of Hampton Court celebrity at home. More than one of them had been upset on this eventful morning, but we managed to preserve the centre of gravity, though the rocking reminded us strongly of the Hannah.

The road, which is lined with trees and villas, and has quite an English appearance, was thronged with carts and carriages, equestrians and pedestrians, and made a show that would not have disgraced a Derby Day. The Malay women, with their coal black hair, and yellow handkerchiefs, were the most novel and striking feature in the scene, which had otherwise nothing foreign in its composition. Indeed, all was honestly English; the macadamized road, the jolting omnibuses, the merry hearts, the homely wit that was flying about, the love of sport that drew us all together. And when we arrived at the course, we drew up at a little public-house, where everything, from the clean sanded parlour, with its high-backed chairs, and old-fashioned clock, to the jolly landlord himself, was thoroughly English —more English indeed than England herself is becoming now-a-days.

The ground was a hill-side, plentifully sprinkled with underwood, fern, &c.; the course was about half a mile, mostly up hill. There was no stand, the only building on the common being the *tronk*, or gaol, the very sight of which was I suppose sufficient, for, though there could not have been less than three or four thousand people collected, there was no need for a single policeman. It was altogether a very gay and pretty sight; and the weather (the only un-English part of the affair) was perfect. The bill of fare was ample, and if the racing was not quite Newmarket, or if the costumes displayed more quaintness and variety than correctness of style, the fun at least could not have been excelled. Besides the legitimate races, which included horse, hack, pony, mule, and donkey, there was climbing greased poles, jumping in sacks, and all the other *etceteras* of a country fair; and lastly, there was an attempt at a hurdle race, which was rich in unseated jockeys and other catastrophes.

It may seem a trivial observation, but I believe it to be a true one, that few things tend more to keep alive in our colonies affection for the mother country than the love of *sport*, which all Englishmen have more or less in common, and which, as one of our chief national characteristics, should never lack encouragement. The Queen's health has seldom been more heartily drunk, or more sincerely wished than it was by her distant subjects on that 24th of May; and the *circenses* had a good deal to do with it.

I would with pleasure have lingered a month at the Cape; and should especially have enjoyed an expedition into the country, and a visit to some of its highly cultivated farms. But I had no excuse for loitering. Our party was again complete by the arrival of Barkley, who had, with his usual luck, got a friendly passage from Algoa Bay in a Government steamer; and our berths were secured on board the Bosphorus, the pioneer of regular steam communication between England and the Cape.

It was just ten days after our disembarkation from the Hannah that we once more turned our backs upon shore, and steamed out of Table Bay on our homeward voyage. We had no quiet little party here, but as motley a set of passengers as could well be brought together. A Roman Catholic bishop, and a dissenting missionary; an officer on sick-leave from India, and a snob returning from the same place with a fortune picked up in trade; a Jew trader from the Sovereignty, and a French baker, and a Swedish captain; an Algoa Bay shopkeeper, and a veteran colonel;—such were some of the repugnant elements that were, for more than a month, to be thrown into contact with each other. Even now I have forgotten our Portuguese, the pleasantest and most gentlemanly fellow of the lot. Don Francisco had but one failing; and so good a fellow was he, that I would refrain from mentioning it, lest I should prejudice you, gentle Reader! against him,—but there is a little tale attached to him. The fact is, the Don was a slave-dealer. At all events, his brig had been captured and brought into Cape Town by H.M.S. Orestes some time before; and the Commissioner had to decide whether she was a lawful prize. On this point the two judges were at issue: our Commissioner contending that she had been rightfully seized, while the Portuguese Commissioner was of opinion that she had been employed in a legal pursuit. Now, in the international treaty for the suppression of the slave-trade, it was decided, that as the difficulty of catching slavers in *flagrante delicto* was very great, and considering the impossibility of proving a case against a slaver if evidence of the *fact* were required, it should be sufficient that so much evidence should be adduced as should convince the judges that there was an intention of slave-dealing, in order to warrant the confiscation of the vessel. The point, in the present case, was rather a delicate one; the only tangible ground for suspicion being a deviation from the course which, if a fair trader, the Eola ought to have held, and the discovery of a number of mats, which, spread over the cargo in the hold, constitute what is called a slave-deck. This latter evidence appeared sufficient to the arbitrator, and accordingly the Eola was condemned, and the Don, who was supposed to be supercargo, or boat-owner, was held to bail to appear on trial.

Among the party who came on board to wish some friends goodbye, and see the steamer off, was one of the judges who had decided this case, and, as ill-luck would have it, on his descending to take a glass of wine in the cabin, he was met by the Don, who, thinking that they were now upon neutral ground, came and shook hands with him in the most courteous manner possible. The judge's consternation was extreme. Here was the man escaping from bail. He felt it his duty to arrest him; but was neither very willing to take advantage of the accidental meeting, nor very sure that he was able to do so,—and so it turned out. For though the ship was stopped at his request, yet the captain refused to lend the slightest assistance in making the arrest, pledging himself only to stand neutral; and the boatmen from shore taking the same line, the amiable and worthy magistrate was obliged to retire, having done his best to perform an unpleasant duty, but not sorry, I really believe, that he had not succeeded in accomplishing it.

As for the passengers, they made common cause with the Don; got him a passport for Lisbon at Sierra Leone; and by this time, I have little doubt, our gentlemanly passenger has laid in a fresh cargo of black cattle, as he called them, and will keep a very sharp look-out for her Majesty's cruisers.

At midnight, on the 8th of June, we passed within half a mile of St. Helena. We were all on deck; and I, for one, remained gazing at the dark mass of rock for several hours. But I confess, that the feeling of interest attached to the first sight of a much-talked of place, and the awe with which a bold rocky shore always impresses me, were not a bit heightened by any sentiment about Napoleon, on whose account I never could contrive to raise one spark of enthusiasm.

Far more delighted was I, when, waking at an early hour on the 17th, after a night on the skirts of a tornado, and peeping through my port-hole, I saw the rich glorious coast of Sierra Leone. After all I had heard against this place, the view that met my eye perfectly astounded me.

Instead of the barren, brown, adust appearance which the south coast of Africa presents, a fresh verdure was all around: green trees waved their boughs over the very edge of the water, and there was a softness and brightness about the scene very unusual in an African landscape.

Boats, full of jabbering niggers and negresses, were shooting rapidly about; and we were quickly boarded by a multitude of women, clamorous for the washing, in which, by the way, they are unrivalled. As we had sixty tons of coal to take in, we determined to make the most of our time, and were soon ashore.

Freetown has a more foreign appearance than any of the South African cities. Many of the houses are well built, and the streets are laid out with great regularity. The smaller shops are quaint little sheds, the upper part projecting over the lower; and they are all kept by women of colour. As there are few, or rather no carriages, there is no dust or dirt in the streets, which are merely wide footpaths, bordered by the very greenest turf—real turf—such as South Africa knows not.

Of the negro population I need say nothing. These people are much the same everywhere; only there is more cant about them at Sierra Leone than in America. I must not, however, fail to acknowledge a share in a sumptuous luncheon, with unlimited champagne, with which Mr. Pratt, a black merchant, who was our fellow-passenger to England, entertained us, and which was really princely.

The true natives (the Medingos), are a very different race. From the little I saw of them, I should be inclined to think them superior in intelligence, if not in physical power, to the Kafir. I am told they are very warlike; that they have cavalry armed with lances, and have given our troops some trouble. A musical instrument of their manufacture, which I saw and heard, exhibits very great ingenuity. It is made of flat bars of wood, of different lengths, set across a frame, on the lower side of which three or four hollow calabashes are fastened. The bars of wood are struck with sticks covered with a material resembling gutta percha, and thus the most delicious sounds are produced.

Among the chief delicacies of this luxurious country are oysters, said to be the finest in the world, and pine-apples, which were sold at three halfpence. Of curiosities, the black monkey skin is in greatest esteem, and the mats are of various patterns, and prettily worked.

Away from this paradise (I could hear nothing of fever or ill health, except as the result of dissipation) with our rigging hung with pines and bananas, and their perfume loading the air.

Our next halt might have been at the Antipodes. St. Vincent, where we stopped again to coal, is a rocky island of the Cape Verde group, of volcanic origin, with scarce a blade of grass upon it, barely enough to subsist a few goats, and a scanty crop or two of Indian corn. The town is a wretched collection of hovels, the inhabitants, Africano-Portuguese, no less dirty and miserable looking; population about one thousand. The only remarkable thing on shore, besides its extreme barrenness, is a burial ground, made by the officers and crew of an American ship, ten of whom died of the African fever, and were buried here. Strangers are requested to contribute to its preservation; and they seem to have complied; for its white wooden monuments and white railings are in good order. The harbour is full of fish; we caught a great variety over the side, and all were good.

East winds rendered the last part of our voyage tedious; but, on the whole, it was a very prosperous one; and convinced me of the superiority, as far as comfort and management are concerned, of the screw over the paddle. We shall know more about the speed after Mr. Mare's large ships have made a trial or two. On the 7th of July we reached Plymouth, just as all our coals were exhausted, and the boiler so encrusted with salt, that we could not get more than six or seven pounds of steam.

I have but one thing to add, dear Reader, to this book, before I submit it to your approval. Long before it meets your eye, if, indeed, it should ever do so, its author hopes to be again among the scenes he has endeavoured to describe, where he has fixed his residence for some years, perhaps for life. He has not attempted, as you can bear him witness, to puff his adopted home; but he can assure you, if you are inclined to try the experiment, and ship yourself and your family to Natal, that you have heard the very *worst* of it, and that you may treat all depreciating accounts that go beyond this with contempt. The *best* is yet to come; and if it should be the author's fortune to address you again, he has little doubt of being able to do so in a bolder and more confident strain of encouragement.

And so Farewell!

* * *

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